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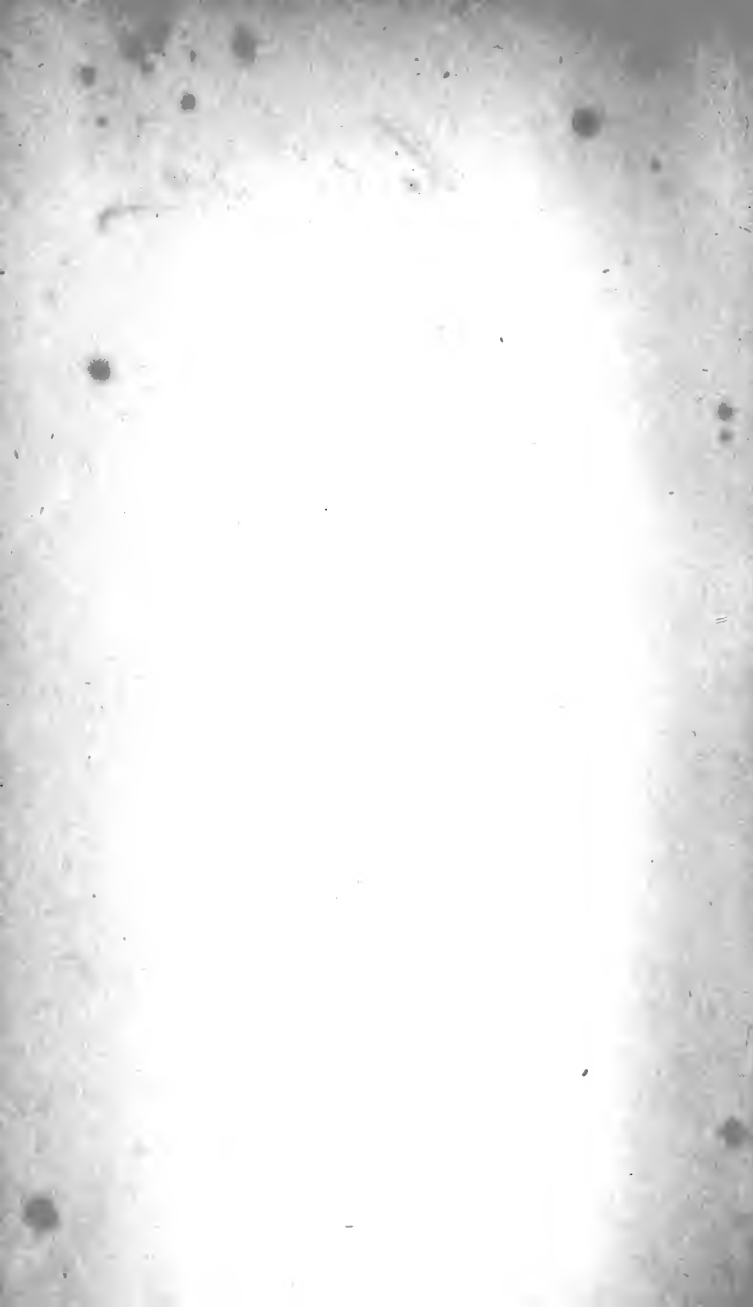
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MARY LYND SAY.

VOL. I.



MARY LYNDSAY.

BY

THE LADY EMILY PONSONBY,

AUTHOR OF

“THE DISCIPLINE OF LIFE,”

“KATHERINE AND HER SISTERS,”

&c., &c.

“How much we love God, how submissive we are to God's will, we cannot otherwise than by willingly undergoing or patiently bearing afflictions, well express; without it no sore trial of virtue can be; without it no excellent example of goodness had ever been.”—BARROW.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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MARY LYNDSAY.

CHAPTER I.

“Her form was fresher than the morning rose,
When the dew wets its leaves.”

THOMSON'S *Seasons*.

ABOUT twenty miles from London, on the Surrey side, stood the curious old villa-like residence called Cleeve. It was a gloomy, and in some senses an ugly place, yet it was not without a picturesque air which gave it attraction. The house was approached by an avenue of yews, very short, and very broad, whose branches had spread and interlaced till they formed a barrier on each side, and in a

degree overhead also. The grounds were large and well laid out, but no taste or care was exercised upon them. There were formal gravel walks, and large patches of ill-kept lawn, dotted with shrubs; but neither flowers nor flower-beds were to be seen; while the thick banks of trees which skirted the pleasure grounds, shut out alike the glow of the sun, and the glimpses of distant landscape, which might have animated the scene.

The house was of brick; the windows narrow and few; the height disproportioned to the width, which gave it a gaunt and spectral air; yet it had its good points also. The white stone copings were well placed and well cut, the pilasters and mouldings of the front door were singularly beautiful, and the white parapet which surrounded the low roof and tall chimneys, gave a light and graceful finish to the building.

Such was Cleeve. Travellers, as they passed, gave it the compliment of attention. Some called it dismal, some—these were chiefly young ladies—called it interesting. Many called it quaint, a vague term, which expresses a certain kind of charm. All wondered what kind of being made that house his dwelling-place.

That being—the present owner of the abode—was called Hubert Merivale.

In a long, low room on the second floor, one Sunday evening in July, the members of the Merivale family were assembled. The day was close, yet the three small windows, recessed within and without, were shut. The northern aspect of the room had protected it from the glare of the sun, but it had the cheerless closeness which northern rooms, unless where the air plays freely, possess. The appearance was as gloomy as the air.

The furniture was good, but heavy and dull. Three handsome cabinets of ebony and silver stood against the wall. The chairs were carved, but ponderous. The curtains and the coverings of the sofa were of a dark stuff,—red, with broad lines of black. No ornaments decorated the table; no flowers gave sweetness to the air. Close as the room was, there was a chill in its atmosphere.

The members of the family were three in number. On a couch placed between a window and the fireplace, lay an old woman, wrapped in shawls and woollen coverings. Her hair was silver white, her features pale and sharp, and marked with excessive suffering; but there was a kind of beauty about her. The countenance, though sad, bore traces of heavenly resignation; the restless eyes, indeed, looked as if panting to be free

from the burden of the flesh ; but the small closed lips spoke of a patience that would endure to the end.

Near her, on the further side of an invalid's table, sat her daughter, a woman neither young nor old. She was six and thirty, a time of life when the mind and habits make either youth or age. It is difficult to describe her. She had what in most persons would have been called beauty. A figure tall and well formed, features small and finely cut, hair glossy and black ; but all these beauties failed to give beauty to her. There was an utter want of life ; her figure had no ease, her complexion no glow, her features no play ; a cheerless gravity, the evident expression of the heart, sat on her brow and weighed it down.

On the opposite side of the fire-place, in an arm-chair, sat the third occupant of the room, Hubert Merivale. He was three or

four years younger than his sister, and was both like and unlike her. He had the same good figure, regular features, and glossy black hair, but the expression of his countenance was different to hers. Though grave, her expression was quiet, and *almost* holy ; but there was no holiness on his brow, or quietness in his stagnant face. A gnawing heart and restless affections were visible in every line and muscle, and it was apparent that the iron will that held them down, found its strength alone in bitterness and contempt.

It was a Sunday evening. There had been long silence in the room, each inmate absorbed in their own reflections. At length a clock struck six. At the signal the invalid opened her eyes, and turned them on her daughter with a movement that spoke more of obedience than of impatience.

Even before the look was directed to her, Miss Merivale had laid her hand upon a

book ; and, glancing, towards her brother, observed, "We shall read, Hubert,—it is the hour."

He inclined his head in acquiescence, but there was a scorn in his face. His mother's eyes were upon him, and her lips moved in a faint endeavour to speak, but no sound came and the effort was unperceived by him.

Miss Merivale began to read. Her voice was not without a low and sad sweetness in its tone. At first it soothed and lulled, but after a short continuance its effect was to depress, or to irritate. She read a sermon. The text, "Man is born to trouble." There was beauty in the language and holiness in the thoughts, but the writer had looked on life through the medium of a sad heart, and even its consolation, except to those who had cast off all hope and desire for earthly happiness, was melancholy.

Mrs. Merivale calmly listened to the words.

In her, who had passed through great tribulation and lay on the borders of rest, the longings of earth were dead. But far different was their effect on her son. He listened as one unwilling, yet compelled to listen; and while he heard, mingled emotions of scorn, disbelief, and a painful confession of their truth, swept over his countenance. For a time he sat in silence; then contracted brows and restless movements showed an irritation hardly to be controlled; finally, he rose and walked up and down the room.

He walked for a time softly, as if unwilling to disturb, and then paused at a window and looked out. Notwithstanding his movements, his sister read on uninterruptedly; but his mother's attention wandered from the book to him. Her eyes watched him, and the movement of her lips might be either a prayer or an unsuccessful effort to speak.

While she gazed, his countenance suddenly changed. It was more than a change, it was a transformation. A glow passed over the pale features, relaxing and softening the rigid muscles, and a smile tender and sweet woke them into beauty.

The momentary glow passed rapidly, as it came, but when he turned about and spoke his voice was still soft. "I see Mary Lyndsay coming here, Catherine."

The intensity of his mother's gaze deepened, and again her lips moved as if in inward prayer. Meanwhile he sat down, and composed his features into their usual gravity.

There came a low tap at the door, and he rose and opened it. A young girl stood without, and in obedience to a sign from her, he left the door ajar and went to her.

"May I go in and see Mrs. Merivale?" she asked, in a hurried, breathless voice, as if the duty she was performing was no

pleasure, but a pain. "Your sister looked so grave at church I felt I *must* come and ask after her. I am afraid she is worse."

"My mother is much the same," he replied sadly, "she never will be better, and when she is worse it will be—to die."

Mary Lyndsay stepped back with a startled look. The plain words shocked, the fact thus stated dismayed her.

"This is no house for you," he observed, perceiving and understanding her movement, and in his tone there was a kind of pity towards her, and of bitterness towards his home.

The unmeant reproof touched a conscience quick in its warnings. She blushed; but without excusing herself, repeated her request to be allowed to go in.

"Come then," he said, and he preceded her into the room. He went forward quickly, placed a chair by his mother's side,

and stooping over her said with tenderness, "Miss Lynd say is come to see you, mother. It will do you good."

As Mary set her foot in the room she paused. It was an involuntary movement. The cheerless aspect chilled her senses. Far different was the effect of her presence. It was like a beam of sunshine, so sweet, so fresh, so spring-like was her air.

The pause was not unperceived by Mr. Merivale, and having placed her seat, he withdrew and sat down.

Mary shook hands with Miss Merivale, and then passed on to the dying woman. She had meant, had hoped to say kind words, but appalled by the sight of that great suffering, words failed her, and when she took the thin fingers stretched out to her, a faint and tremulous smile was all she could force in return.

No attempt at conversation was made by

the others ; they all sat for some seconds, or it might be minutes, in silence. Miss Merivale then spoke.

“ We were reading, Miss Lyndsay. It is our usual hour.”

Mr. Merivale frowned, but she did not heed him.

“ Pray don’t let me interrupt you,” Mary cried hastily, thankful to be relieved from the necessity of speech. “ I shall be very glad to listen, if I may stay.”

“ Will *you* read, Miss Lyndsay ? Reading is the greatest comfort my mother has, and your voice will be soothing to her.”

There was nothing of a Sister of Charity about Mary Lyndsay. Startled at the unexpected request, she was about to excuse herself, when she met the eager, restless eyes of the invalid turned upon her with a beseeching gaze. Her heart was too kind to withstand so piteous a look, and though

trembling and reluctant, she faltered an acquiescence.

Miss Merivale rose and placed a Bible in her hands, and was about to direct her to some particular passage, when a stern voice behind broke in upon them.

“Let *her* choose, Catherine.”

The order was so peremptorily given that she could do nothing but obey, and she sat down. Mary’s fingers fluttered over the leaves, and her cheeks became crimson. She was little versed in the Sacred Writings, and even had she been so, was too nervous at this moment to consider what might be a proper choice. She turned hastily to the Psalm whose simple imagery and thankful tone makes it a favourite with the young.

“‘The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters.’”

The young cheerful voice gave a joyous tone to the Psalm. It was a note of music which had not been heard in that room for years. The eyes of the sufferer rested on the young girl's face with an expression of peace and thankfulness, as if in her voice she heard an echo of the voices she was hastening to hear.

"Another, Miss Lyndsay!" The words were abruptly said, but the accents were not so much peremptory as beseeching.

Mary looked up; dark, troubled eyes were bent down upon her; she turned to the invalid and met her unearthly looks; nervously she again opened the Bible, and almost at random read some other well-known words.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul! all that is within me, bless His holy Name!"

When a few short verses had been read,

the excitement which had hitherto prompted her gave way ; and suddenly feeling all the strangeness of her position, embarrassment overpowered her, and, coming to a pause, she closed the book as if she could read no more.

No one spoke ; all seemed unwilling to break the echoes of the music she had made.

At last Mary rose to go, and as she stooped over the couch of the invalid, she softly said, "I am so sorry for your pain."

There was no reply in words, but a strange sweet smile lighted up the faded face, and the thin fingers grasped her hand. Mary held them for a moment, then, bending lower with tearful eyes, pressed her lips on the burning brow.

The kindness was unexpected, and body and spirit felt it. "God bless you !"

burst from the lips that rarely spoke, as if that soft, cool touch had brought reviving with it.

Mary paused to brush her tears away, then held out her hand to Miss Merivale.

“We thank you for coming,” said the latter, in her voice of soft gravity, “and believe me, Miss Lyndsay, the sight of sorrow and sickness will not be unprofitable for you, for sorrow comes too soon to all.”

Mr. Merivale walked impatiently to the door, and Mary, with a heightened colour, followed. The admonition had been unseasonable, chilling the softened heart.

At the door she again held out her hand to Mr. Merivale. He did not refuse it, but said, “I shall come down with you;” and together they descended the stairs. The house was very dreary. The

walls of the stairs and passages were of oak, gloomy and bare. The doors were all closed; neither air nor sunshine brought freshness or light.

Mary felt a sensation of joy when she stood outside. She then, for the second time, held out her hand, but perceived that Mr. Merivale was going on with her. The gloom of the house had hitherto kept her silent. She now felt she ought to speak.

"Does not your mother like flowers?" she asked.

"We have no flowers here," he replied, a strange sadness in his voice.

"But they would soon grow," she said, cheerfully.

"Would they?" he said, and his eye rested on her; a very different thought in his mind.

"There can be no reason against it.

On the other side you have the sun. It would make such a difference," she continued, growing eager; "I wonder you do not have flowers."

"Our ways are not your ways," he replied, after a short pause. "Would to Heaven they were!"

She hardly knew how to answer this speech, and walked on in silence. Silence suited best the sombre path they trod. Above were glimpses of blue sky smiling on all who would receive its smile, but on each side were those dull, dark barriers which made even the July evening chill. Unconsciously Mary's step grew faster and faster till she reached and passed the gate.

Not a movement was unperceived by him, and when she stopped and said "Good-bye," he said, "You have done a painful duty; you have my thanks and

my mother's blessing for it. Would they were welcome to you!"

Again Mary's quick conscience was touched. It *had* been a painful duty, long delayed, and, though done of free will, reluctantly done. She looked up penitently and with tearful eyes, and as she put her hand in his, softly said, "It makes me sad to come, but I ought not to mind. It does me good, and if I may I will soon come again."

Something indescribable came over his face, and the hand he held was raised to his lips. The action concealed the countenance, and, though certainly startled, Mary thought it only one among his many strange ways. It made her cheek crimson, but she smiled as she said "Good night," and hurried away.

CHAPTER II.

“I feel the gales that from you blow,
A momentary bliss bestow,
As waving forth their gladsome wing,
My weary soul they seem to soothe.”

GRAY.

THAT Mr. Merivale loved Mary Lyndsay has, of course, been surmised, but it would be false to suppose that his gloom proceeded from a hopeless passion.

A constitutional melancholy of nature was inherent in the Merivale family, though in form and in degree it varied in every separate member. In the grand-

father of Hubert, it had been simply an eccentricity. He, inheriting from his father the house and grounds of Cleeve in their first rude outline, had pleased himself in making it different to the abodes of his neighbours; and as they one and all appeared to delight in brightness, and to admire the fine expanse of Surrey landscape, he, either in opposition to the common taste, or in conformity to his own, set to work to plant out the landscape, and to make the best in all other ways of the opportunities for gloom which his demesne afforded. In the father of Hubert, the melancholy had less of eccentricity and more of matter of fact. He was grave and sober by nature, and he systematized his gravity and sobriety into a regular form. If the word revel is not inappropriate to the word gloom, it might be said that he revelled in

gloomy thoughts and gloomy sights. It was a real satisfaction to him to watch a funeral, and to say, "There I go, and there goes all humanity." With this turn of mind, his father's eccentric plans for Cleeve suited well. He carried them on, excluding every flower, planting out still more densely the landscape and shutting out the sun. Miss Merivale again was like her father, though in a softened form. Her melancholy was *almost* holy. She was glad to do good; but it was in one view only, to make the soul fitter for death; and this constant thought, not of Heaven, but of *death*, had laid a paralyzing hand upon her mind and body.

Hubert Merivale was formed in a different mould. The melancholy inherited from one parent had to strive with an ardent thirst for happiness inherited from his mother; and in his youth the latter in-

fluence had been paramount. At twenty he was a youth of much promise. His character was peculiar, and in its peculiarities caused some anxious thoughts, but it was full of amiable and lovable qualities, which seemed to need only care and culture to bring them to perfection. At thirty, he was the withered being we have seen in the last chapter.

The melancholy of his home was the first influence which acted perniciously on his nature. Some natures make sunshine wherever they are placed, but his was not buoyant enough for this. He loved sunshine, but could not make it; gloom was akin to some portions of his soul, and he bowed beneath its influence. He loved the old mansion of Cleeve, but he wished to beautify it. At eight years old he had begged with tears to be allowed a flower-garden, but his tears and his

mother's efforts failed alike to obtain the permission. He was told that father and grandfather had chosen to have Cleeve *as it was*, and it was not for a child to alter it. At thirty, Hubert cherished the gloom like his forefathers; nay, to gloom he added discomfort.

The gloom of his home in opening manhood drove him from it. He loved his mother with a love approaching to worship; but though this love brought constant returns to her side, the depression of the atmosphere that surrounded her as constantly drove him away. She, like him, could not make sunshine. Gentle and placid, she could but assimilate herself to those with whom she lived, and who domineered over her. Long years of bodily suffering had quenched the spring of life, and the resignation which had grown up in the stead of

earthly desires, and which enabled her to perform the duties allotted to her with contentment, was too high and too holy for her son's imitation. He loved her, but did not love her thoughts. His visits became few and far between.

Driven into the world alone, his peculiar disposition exposed him to peculiar dangers. Those who depend only on what is without them for cheering and amusement, are usually the prey of every excitement, however frivolous it be. But Hubert's nature had too much force to be roused by frivolity. He required stronger food. Shy and sensitive also, he required courting before his gifts and talents could come forth; he required to be made much of—to be at ease. All his tendencies drove him in one direction—to seek, namely, the distractions he needed in society beneath him; in a

society whose freedom from artificial restraints gave scope for greater originality of thought, and which welcomed him with that warm and natural welcoming which is given to those whose coming is a favour. In this society he formed an attachment, passionate and ungoverned. It continued for three years ; it was cherished as his own life. It ended in falsehood and disgust, and a sting of poison was planted in Hubert's soul.

The history of this attachment and its end was a mystery ; in some hours of anguish breathed perhaps in his mother's ears, but breathed to her alone. At four and twenty, Hubert Merivale had lost youth, faith, trust, goodness, hope. On the melancholy Merivale nature the blow fell, and there was no effort from within to resist its effects.

Not many months after this event, his

father fell into bad health, and after lingering for a year, died. Hubert was much at home during that long illness. The gloom that hung about the house had a sort of charm for him. His mother attempted to seize the moment to win him to religious hope and comfort. She thought the reflections that had repelled him in his younger days, might cheer and comfort now. But in vain. He listened to her voice, appreciated her cares, but to the hopes she held out was deaf as the deaf adder. There was no faith left in his heart ; no love, except in one small spot where she was worshipped still.

His character hardened into iron. But a hard heart does not remain empty. Where one passion has been driven out with violence, another is most likely to enter in. It was a singular passion which

filled up the void in Hubert's heart, yet, perhaps, not a rare one. The elder brother in Crabbe's "Tales of the Hall," solaced his disappointed affections with the love of money, and so did Hubert Merivale.

His father was a banker—so had been his grandfather and great-grandfather. It was an old-established bank, not indifferent to the increase of worldly good, but steady and methodical in its ways ; running no risks, making no uncertain speculations, maintaining a sure and steady reputation in the world. His father's death left Hubert the head of the house. Hitherto, though educated with a view to his future duties, he had thought but little of them. Money had been no object and no interest. But, at this time, money, with its strange attractions coming daily before him, found his heart empty

and seized upon it. At first, after the idleness of misery, the mere occupation was a charm; then the charm of occupation turned to the passion of money-making. He left Cleeve to his mother and sister; established himself in the old family mansion in London, and yielded heart and soul to the snare set for him. The house lost its old methodical character, but gained in reputation, for it was felt that a keen intellect was now governing its transactions. He grew very rich, and as he grew rich he began to hoard. These were the steps by which the most sordid of all passions entered his heart—that strong heart into which all that entered became a passion.

His mother saw the growing evil, and exerted all her powers to save him. In the way of direct exhortation she could do little, for he was not one for argu-

ments ; but she poured upon him such a flood of tender love and care as would have melted a harder heart than his. So long as love remained alive, she did not despair ; and she felt that he returned love to her love.

Her efforts were not unsuccessful. There was no great improvement ; but he went no further in his evil course. The pursuit of money remained his object ; for this he toiled, for this he spared ; but the flame of charity was not extinct in him. His mother might justly mourn over him, his sister justly condemn, his fellows shrink from him as a moody and miserable being, but he remained still a man—a man with a living heart, beating beneath the cheerless face he showed the world.

Such was his history till he reached the age of thirty. There came then a slight change. On his birthday of thirty

he chanced to be at Cleeve, visiting his mother. His sister, who counted birthdays in a melancholy and not a rejoicing sense, met him in the morning with some reflections on the lapse of time ; reminded him that he was thirty, that youth was swiftly passing, that a cheerless middle age was before him ; and urged him, with words not without sense and goodness, yet unseasonable, to awake before it was too late, and think of his immortal soul.

Hubert heard her with a pale cheek and tightly pressed lips. That cheerless middle age looked dreary enough to his eyes, and her words found a responding voice within ; but when she had done he gloomily told her henceforward to count his birthdays no more.

With his mother it was a day of uncommon pain. Her disease was in the spine, and she was subject to paroxysms

of acute agony. But, towards evening, the pain abated, and she was carried down to the drawing-room. Hubert came to her there, and sat down by her couch. The sight of her pain, and of her patience, and perhaps, also, some acknowledgment of the truth of his sister's words, some sudden recollection that he was thirty, and that youth was passing, had softened his mood on that day, and he sat by his mother, holding her hand as any affectionate son might have done.

"You are thirty to-day, dearest Hubert," his mother said, gently.

"Yes, mother," and he involuntarily sighed. Not that he cared for the lapse of time; but that some recollection of what youth had been, some dread of the future had been awakened, and, for the time being, he was human again.

“ Oh ! my dearest boy, would that happier returns might be yours,” burst from his mother’s feeble lips. She had forgotten the lapse of time ; she called him boy again, and the very form of speech bore him away in spirit to an almost forgotten period.

His lip quivered, and he stooped over her and kissed her.

It was a Sunday evening, and, as he kissed his mother, the clock struck six. Miss Merivale rose from her seat, took a book in her hand, and observing, “ We will read, mother,” immediately began.

The moment had been expected and prepared for, and she read out her appropriate text with hope in her heart, and prayer also, that it might be profitable to her brother’s soul,—

“ Lord, teach us to number our days,

that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

And there followed on these words a sad and somewhat stern discourse.

The softness faded from Hubert's countenance. The thought of youth, which for a moment had reanimated him, faded also. Life, cold, and grey, and blank, and joyless, spread out before him. Still holding his mother's hand, he endured to the end; he could not pain her by a show of his indifference; but when the soft, monotonous voice ceased, he rose and left the room.

His mother's eye followed him with anxiety, his sister's with hope. She thought to her it had been given to touch his heart at last.

Hubert entered the gloomy avenue, and paced up and down. He was agitated, as for six or seven cold years he had ceased

to be ; as he had thought he never could be again. Whence came his agitation he could not tell.

“ How or why we know not, nor can trace
Home to its cloud the lightning of the mind.”

But it was so. His heart was stirred, and would not be lulled to rest.

At the end of the avenue was a lodge. It was now empty. To declare a lodge unnecessary had been one of Hubert's singular madnesses of economy. The door of the sitting-room was open, and unrepelled by the discomfort of its appearance, he after a time went in and sat down. He leaned his arms on a table and remained buried in reflection. These reflections were bitter enough. The softer memories of youth had been banished by his sister's discourse, but out of the stirred heart other memories had risen up fresh and strong. How he had loved, how he had trusted, how he had been deceived.

His meditations were interrupted by a loud boyish laugh. Some laughs are pleasant to hear, and some laughs are irritating even to patient tempers ; this was of the latter class. It was not perfectly genuine, and had a touch of self-complacency in it. It roused Hubert from his meditations, but did not rouse him pleasantly. He started up in wrath, and was about to emerge from his retreat and warn off the intruder, when another sound chained him to the spot. It was the voice of a young girl, gentle and sweet.

“Don’t, Frank. Pray, don’t laugh so loud, I am sure it must belong to somebody who is unhappy; no happy person *could* live in such a place.

“I think it belongs to Mr. Nobody. I wish I could get a sight of him. Now do look, Mary, not even a bird stirring: even the birds are scared away.”

The loud voice was at the gate, and the soft

voice now drew nearer and joined him there. "It looks quite deserted, but perhaps it is only that somebody is unhappy or ill. Dear Frank, do let us go on; we ought not to be so curious," and she glanced round anxiously as if afraid of being overheard.

"Oh! yes we ought. Why, Mary, what a fool you are! What possible harm can we do? I like to look. I believe you expect a hobgoblin to burst out upon us, or perhaps, more interesting to girls, a lover mad with love."

As the last words were pronounced, Mr. Merivale issued from the lodge and stood before them. Pale and melancholy, he might have personated either character. He paused, glancing at the speakers. One was a slender looking girl about fifteen, fair and healthful, and with a sweet smiling countenance. Her companion was a year or two older.

The boy drew back, startled and cowardly.

The girl stood firm, and with a blush made their apologies. "I beg your pardon. I am afraid we have been very impertinent, but indeed we did not know there was any one near."

"There is no offence, you are very welcome," Mr. Merivale said in a voice so gentle and soft that his mother would hardly have known it.

There was a pause. He then came to the gate and undid it. "I do not *invite* you to come in," he said with emphasis on the word, "for I heard the opinion you expressed, but the gate is open and I am going home, and if it will give you pleasure to inspect my gloomy premises you and your companion are welcome."

He fixed his eyes upon her for a moment, then inclined his head and hastened away.

The brother and sister stood outside the gate. "Oh, Frank!" Mary exclaimed in consternation.

"No harm done," he replied, advancing boldly, "he don't seem a bit angry, and why should he? I said no harm. Shall we go in?"

"I suppose we *must*. He was very kind, and it would look uncivil; but I would rather not, and we will not stay," and with an inward shudder she set her foot within the gates.

Ashamed of his late careless words, Frank submitted to her will in going quickly and rapidly through the pleasure-grounds. The sight of the gloomy alleys and dull patches of grass increased Mary's dislike, and she drew a breath as the survey finished. "I am so glad to be out again," she said cheerfully, as her eyes surveyed the broad bright landscape.

"And I am sorry," said the boy, "and the next time we go in, you shan't get me out so fast, I can tell you."

"The next time," with a look of dismay; "why, Frank, we need not go in again."

"Need not! no, of course, but I mean to go, and to take you with me. Why, Mary, what a fool you are, you look as glum as that poor, thin hermit himself."

"He did look so melancholy," she said, and her countenance *was* glum and overshadowed. "I wonder——no, I don't—at least, I won't—I won't think about him any more."

"Why, Mary," and her brother stared at her, "you *are* a fool. I always thought you were a sensible girl, and one day when Tom Stanley said all sisters were fools, I said mine was not. There's for you! but I shan't say so again."

"I do so hate to think there is un-

happiness in the world," and she sighed a real heavy sigh; but the next moment roused herself, and calling, "Come this way, Frank, let us go home through these fields," she climbed over a hedge, led the way, and Frank followed.

The Lyndsays were new-comers to the neighbourhood. Captain Lyndsay was poor and proud, and unwilling that his poverty should be seen, lived a retired life. On hearing, however, what had occurred, he passed his decree that, if there were ladies in the family, they must be visited. Perhaps, while his son described how the poor hermit looked at Mary, an idea—the first seed of an idea,—was planted in his mind."

The call was made, and so began a kind of acquaintance between the families—an acquaintance thankfully received on

the part of the Merivales, but on the part of the Lyndsays reluctantly offered. Mrs. Lyndsay was indolent, and rarely did anything she could avoid. Mary's reluctance had a deeper foundation. The gloom repelled her; the sight of the sorrow and suffering made her unhappy. She went only when conscience and pity spoke too loudly to be withstood, and then paid such hurried visits as the one described in the first chapter.

During the three years that elapsed between the two interviews that have been recorded, Mary occasionally met Mr. Merivale. It was in some of her Sunday evening rambles with her brother that these meetings occurred; and when they occurred, kindness, not good-will, prompted her to stop and speak to him. Sometimes she inquired after his mother, and then her voice was soft, and her

countenance pitiful. Sometimes she merely said, "What a lovely day!" and then the sunshine of the sunny evening seemed reflected in her eyes. Mr. Merivale replied to her inquiries, or assented to her exclamations, but never attempted conversation, never sought to detain, or offered to accompany them. Yet while his eyes rested on her, the gloom dispersed from his countenance, and when she went on her way, his gaze followed her light figure as long as a glimpse could be seen.

About a year after his first meeting with Mary, Hubert paid a visit to Captain Lyndsay. It was his first visit, and Captain Lyndsay was flattered and surprised. Still more was he surprised when Mr. Merivale, opening his business, asked if a clerkship in his bank would be acceptable for his son. Captain Lynd-

say was poor, his son nineteen, extravagant, and unprovided for. The boon was as welcome as it was unexpected.

His expressions of gratitude were cut short by a simple assurance on Mr. Merivale's part, "I am happy to serve you;" but having so said, he proceeded to dwell on the advantages of the offer, and to enumerate the duties and acquirements the situation required. There was, as he spoke, an eagerness in his countenance and a wary worldliness in his tone which astonished Captain Lyndsay. He found it hard to reconcile these qualities with the melancholy of his appearance. He looked at him with curiosity, and was observing with admiration the intellectual development of his forehead, and with interest and sympathy the expression of shrewdness in his eyes, when suddenly the whole countenance changed,

melted, softened—the eager words for a moment ceased to flow, and when the thread of discourse was resumed, the worldly shrewdness of tone was gone. The speech was finished in a calm, grave manner, altogether different from its beginning.

In the instant of the pause a newspaper had fallen to the ground, and beneath the paper lay a small water-coloured sketch of Mary Lyndsay. Captain Lyndsay was an observant man. He saw the change and its cause. When the visit was over, a smile passed over his face, and a vague thought took a lodgment in his mind. He had an iron will, and no thought lodged in his mind with impunity.

CHAPTER III.

“Beautiful as sweet,
 And young as beautiful, and soft as young,
 And gay as soft, and innocent as gay,
 And happy (if aught happy here) as good.”

YOUNG'S *Night Thoughts*.

“THAT pretty Mary Lyndsay! such a gay, fresh, simple being! I never see her without feeling happier and better; and her laugh must be like that of Eve in Paradise. I don't care about beauty in itself; an ugly person often pleases me as much as a pretty one; but I own it is a pleasure to me to look in Mary

Lyndsay's face ; what a transparent complexion she has ! You see heart and mind both shining through it ; and her colour shames every rose I ever saw ; and then those soft, dark, clear grey eyes, I know nothing like them but the stars in the sky."

A young man who was writing at a table at some distance, here looked up with a smile, and exclaimed :—

"My dear Mrs. Clifton, who is this goddess ?"

Mrs. Clifton laughed.

"I forgot you were there, Captain Sinclair, or I should perhaps have restrained my feelings ; but since you have heard my lavish praises, I will not retract them ; on the contrary, I will fortify them by an unbiassed opinion. Am I not right, Miss Merivale ? Does not Mary Lyndsay justify all I have said about her ?"

“Mary Lynd say is certainly very pretty,” was the slow but not reluctant answer. “She has also a good heart and a sweet disposition. When time and sorrow have touched and softened her, she may, perhaps she will, I fervently trust, merit all that her too partial friends can say or think.”

“Time and sorrow for Mary! Oh! Miss Merivale, spare *her*! I give up the selfish, the wilful, and worldly to your severe discipline, but Mary is as innocent as a bird, and I don’t think the refiner’s fire could bring her out purer than she is.”

“We all need the discipline of sorrow,” replied Miss Merivale, gravely; “and happy it is for us that we are not spared the affliction that is for our good.”

The two speakers were strong contrasts to each other, not less in appearance and

manner than in mind. With Miss Merivale acquaintance has already been made. Mrs. Clifton was a widow lady of fifty, or something less. Her appearance is best expressed by the word comely, for without any of the higher qualities of beauty, she was fair, fresh, and intelligent; dressed without affectation of youth, yet with the tastefulness that gives some of youth's freshness to maturer years. Her countenance spoke of good humour, kindness, liveliness, and love of ease and pleasure. Life's joys and sorrows had evidently passed over her with a light tread. There was no mark of any footstep that had left a deep impression behind.

Miss Merivale was paying an early visit. She had called to thank Mrs. Clifton for some kind attention to her invalid mother. She was the same on a visit as she was

at home—sad, grave, and austere. Yet even on a visit she did not excite anger. Her sadness depressed, but did not irritate; it was the nature of the woman so to think and speak; and her opinions were not adopted in affected seriousness or intolerance.

“I repeat Miss Merivale,” continued Mrs. Clifton, eagerly, in reply to her speech, “you shall have the wicked all to yourself; but Mary needs no discipline. She is——what is it Young says when he describes his Narcissa in those melancholy ‘Thoughts’ of his?” and she quoted the lines which head this chapter.

“Mary is innocent, I do believe,” her companion replied; “what we call innocent, but what is that innocence when brought in contact with the temptations of the world? It is more frail than the

whiteness of snow. Mary wants strength of principle, and, above all, wants seriousness. Grave thoughts have no place in her mind—nay, are distasteful to her.”

“Why should they? My dear Miss Merivale, at Mary’s age, what has she to do with gravity?”

“Because grave thoughts are the only enduring ones,” she replied, not without a sad sweetness in her tone. “How will Mary’s gaiety bear the hours of sickness, and of what avail will it be on the bed of death?”

“I think a thankful heart a good preparation even for the valley of death. You seem to forget, Miss Merivale, that man is called on to praise as well as to pray.”

Miss Merivale was silent for a moment ; she then replied, “I may, perhaps, feel

these things too strongly ; but I confess that when I look about me and see the guilt and suffering of every class, I am sometimes tempted to wonder whether our very smiles should not be reckoned among our sins."

The bright eyes of Mrs. Clifton danced with desire to console her by the reflection that her sins on that score were limited in number ; but she refrained, and, after a few more words, Miss Merivale rose and wished her good-bye. In taking leave, she repeated her thanks in her mother's name, and, though her manner was unmoved, it was evident the kindness offered by Mrs. Clifton had been felt.

As she quitted the room Mrs. Clifton sighed with the bright, happy sigh of a joyous heart. The young man left his unfinished letter and came toward her.

“ Who is that lady ? ” he inquired.

“ Her name is Merivale. She lives at a gloomy old house a mile from here.”

“ She keeps all her merriment then for her name. Excuse the wretched pun. I only made it because it seemed to be expected of me ; for, in fact, the thoughts she excited in my mind were not mirthful ones.”

“ I should think not, indeed ; and her mother, and her brother, and her home, are all the same. What old ballad or fairy tale is there with a “ doleful lady ” in it ? I always think of her as the doleful lady.”

The young man smiled, but not with a heartfelt smile. He was thoughtful.

“ And yet, Mrs. Clifton,” he said, after a moment, “ there is a great deal of truth in what that lady said.”

“ Do you think so ? I do not. I

think her view of life as false, happily, as it is painful. What did she say that took your fancy?"

"Do you know how certain sentences sometimes take hold of one's mind and make a habitation there? When she said 'Because grave thoughts are the only enduring ones,' I felt as if the words would haunt me all my life.

"So as they do not make you as doleful as Miss Merivale, I don't care how much they haunt you," said Mrs. Clifton, lightly, not much disposed for serious discussions.

The look of thought and interest passed from her companion's face, and he continued in a tone more like her own, "And so this Mary Lyndsay, or Miss Lyndsay, as I suppose I ought to say, is of a very contrary disposition to Miss Merivale."

"Contrary! Oh! yes. They are the

antipodes. Summer and winter, sun and frost, all that kind of difference. You must see Mary—you *will* see her, for I half expect her this morning. I know she will please you."

"To prevent disappointment," he said, smiling, "I may as well tell you beforehand that I do not think she will. I am not fond of gay young ladies; nor over-merry ones; nor does a pretty face infallibly please me."

"Trust me, Mary will please you. I have been famous all my life for my skill in matching people. Do not suppose I mean matrimonially. You need not gather yourself up as if you thought I had designs upon you. I only mean that I can always guess *who* will like *who*."

"I did not gather myself up," he said, laughing. "I am very willing to be disposed of matrimonially to a woman that

pleases me. No matchmaker in Christendom could force upon me a woman without my will."

Mrs. Clifton walked to the window and looked out; seeing nothing, she came back and resumed the conversation.

"And what kind of a woman would your will receive? I can guess. Some ideal, unearthly paragon, who never has been seen, and never will."

"No, far from it. I am no lover of paragons, either of beauty or otherwise. Quiet, sensible, and good-tempered, and a countenance that books call sweet. There is my paragon. I want no more."

"Do you wish to marry?" Mrs. Clifton asked, more seriously.

"My dear Mrs. Clifton, what has my poverty to do with matrimony?"

"There is Mary," cried Mrs. Clifton, as she again walked to the window. "Come,

Captain Sinclair, and tell me if I am not right."

Alan Sinclair obeyed; watching his eager hostess with a smile, as she repeatedly called for his opinion, before anything but the fluttering of a pink muslin dress could be seen. At length he said, playfully, "Since my opinion seems to be a serious matter, I refuse to give it till I have had a better opportunity of judging. Do not ask me till the visit is over. Who is her conductor?"

"Her brother, Frank Lyndsay."

"And is he, too, a paragon?"

"No, by no means—a mere boyish rattle—very boyish, and thinking himself the contrary. There is no harm in him."

"Oh! my blessed Mary!" she said, extending her arms to her as she entered, with eager cordiality; "I was beginning to fear you would fail me."

“Frank was lazy this morning,” Mary said, smiling; “it is his fault that I am late.”

“Now, Mary,” cried her brother, “that is what I call a shame. I give up very important business to attend to you; and this is the way you thank me.”

“But I hope, Mr. Lyndsay, you consider my service of some importance. You do not speak in a very flattering way.”

Frank blushed, with the fear that he had been wanting in manners to a lady, and blushed more when Mrs. Clifton, without waiting for his apology, called Alan Sinclair from the recess in the window, where he still stood, and introduced him to the brother and sister.

Frank’s manners were very perfect in his own estimation, and in that of the young ladies and gentlemen with whom he associated; but there was something

in Alan Sinclair's appearance which made him afraid; the manners of the man who had no thought of his manners, contrasted with the self-delighted manners of the youth.

As they all sat down, his rattling tongue became for a time abashed, and Mary, no great talker, and somewhat afraid, like her brother, of the fine young man, was obliged to take the burden on herself. In Mrs. Clifton's presence that burden was usually slight; but she was too much bent this morning on drawing Mary out, and the effort was apparent.

An easier tone was shortly given by a sudden request from Mary to Mrs. Clifton for some work, observing that she hated to be idle.

"You exemplary character," said Mrs. Clifton, laughing, as she pushed some knitting towards her. "I had no idea I

was cherishing so severe a monitress. I love at times a pleasant idleness, and I hoped you did the same."

"There is no hope from Mary," Frank now burst forth, in a very ill-used tone; "she is exactly like that tiresome busy bee children are bothered about. Always finding something that must be done."

"You seem to object, Mr. Lyndsay; now I, on the contrary, though it reproves me, confess it to be an estimable frame of mind."

"Estimable, yes. But one does not care about that. When one wants to be idle, it is not pleasant to see a person determined to be busy."

Mary looked at her brother and smiled, but made no defence.

"I differ entirely with you," observed Alan Sinclair, "I am all on the industrious side. The look of an idle person

worries me to death; and for myself, I often wish my fingers had been taught some useful or ornamental accomplishment. Perhaps I shall learn. Those big needles and blue worsted look very attractive."

"An idle man on a rainy day is certainly an awful being," said Mrs. Clifton; "so far I give into your opinion, but I have a most determined objection to the prevalence of accomplishments among mankind. In proportion to the increase of their manual labour, their mental agreeableness diminishes. Observe a man drawing, he is up in the sky, no word to be got from him. I know a young gentleman who sews—I assure you he sews, as if he was sewing his soul. With a woman it is otherwise. Idle as I am, I have no objection to an employed woman. Her fingers follow her intellect, not her intellect her fingers."

“Now, Mrs. Clifton,” said Alan, “I am going to say an uncivil thing—you have just explained a very great and striking difference between men and women. Men are always in earnest, and give their hearts to what they do—women are dissipated beings, and work with half, or less than half their souls.”

“Men do everything better than women,” said Frank; “they even work better, I have heard it said a hundred times.”

“Mr. Lyndsay is in a very gallant humour this morning,” said Mrs. Clifton, laughing.

Frank blushed again. He had said what he said, to give a “set down” to Mary, and was alarmed about his manners again. With an awkward attempt at a compliment, he was beginning to say something about always excepting Mrs Clifton, but she cut him short by

rising, and observing that luncheon was ready.

As they sat down, Mrs. Clifton pointed to some grapes in the middle of the table, and said—

“Miss Merivale called to thank me this morning, Mary. She says the grapes and flowers gave real pleasure to her mother.”

“I thought they would. How strange it is they do not have them for her!”

“I told her it was your thought, and she seemed pleased.”

“Thank you,” Mary said, with earnestness. “I do think of that poor old Mrs. Merivale more than I like, and I am glad she should know it.”

“More than you like, my dear child! Do you make yourself unhappy about her?”

“It makes me unhappy to think there

can be such pain in the world. She does seem to suffer so much. If you saw her, you would feel the same, Mrs. Clifton."

"No, my love, I should not. My principle and my advice is, do all the good you can, relieve all the suffering you can, but do not let your own peace of mind be troubled by sorrows you cannot relieve. Life is not long enough for that. Am I not right, Captain Sinclair?"

"You are philosophical," he said, doubtfully, "and perhaps more right than at first sight seems apparent."

Afraid of a philosophical discussion, Frank here interposed to give a turn to the conversation.

"Miss Merivale ought not to pay morning visits. She is such a damper to the spirits, they suffer from it all the rest of the day."

"Is she always as melancholy as she was to day?" Alan said to Mary.

"She is always grave," Mary replied.

"And not only grave herself," added Frank, "but her object is to make the whole world as morose, miserable, and melancholy as she and her household are. I consider her a missionary sent on earth to preach bad tidings."

Mrs. Clifton laughed heartily, and elated by her laugh, Frank proceeded to relate some laughable yet melancholy anecdotes of the gloom of the Merivales. He did it with liveliness, and Mrs. Clifton laughed again, and Alan also; but Mary looked grave and annoyed.

Alan Sinclair paused in his laughing, and said, observing her countenance—

"I am sure, Miss Lyndsay, we ought not to laugh. Perhaps Miss Merivale is a friend of yours."

“Oh! no,” Mary cried, hastily; “no friend, but I can’t laugh at her. She is kind in her way, and she only means to do right.”

“Are you defending Miss Merivale, Mary?” exclaimed Mrs. Clifton; “I thought she was your bugbear, your *bête noire*! When did you begin to like her?”

“Mary don’t like her,” said Frank, preventing her reply, “a bit better than we do, but this is one of her solemn ideas. I am very glad you see her in her grave mood; I daresay you had no idea she could be as wise as Solomon and as grave as an owl. This is the face she puts on if I do but dare to comment on Mr. or Miss Merivale,” and he drew his countenance into a ludicrous imitation of Mary’s gravity.

“I cannot laugh at the Merivales,” Mary replied, blushing a little, but not

abashed; "and I don't like Frank to laugh. Mr. Merivale has been very kind to him, and altogether they are not people to laugh at."

"Is Mr. Merivale like his sister?" Alan inquired.

"Yes," replied Frank, and "No," Mary, in the same instant.

"Two decided answers; on which side does the truth lie?"

"I understand Mr. Lyndsay's 'yes' better than Mary's 'no,'" observed Mrs. Clifton.

"What great difference do you see, Mary?"

"I never think them alike. Mr. Merivale is not so good and kind as his sister, but there is something in him I like better. I sometimes think there must be reasons why he is so grave, for I *have* seen him look different. I had much rather never see him, but when I do see him, I am sorry for him."

“What a change a few words can make!” Alan Sinclair said, smiling. “In my vision of Mr. Merivale, I had hitherto seen only a man Miss Merivale, but now in my mind’s eye I see a *héros de roman*, a mystery, a Lord Byron character.”

“You see too much now,” Mary replied, smiling also. “Mr. Merivale is very cold and dry, and not at all a hero.”

“I feel a strange interest in these Merivales, Mrs. Clifton,” continued Alan, “can you account for it?”

“Perfectly. I saw how it was with you as soon as ever Miss Merivale left the room.”

“I mean it seriously,” he said; “I feel so extreme a desire to see Mr. Merivale, that I am capable of anything to accomplish it. Have I any chance if I devote the afternoon to my object.”

“Oh! no,” was Mary’s reply; “Mr.

Merivale is a banker, and lives in London."

"A banker in London! you astonish me, Miss Lyndsay! Mr. Merivale has now assumed a third form in my eyes. He has a long nose, and the eyes of a Jew."

"You will be grievously disappointed when you do see him," Frank said. "Mr. Merivale is nothing but a dry stick, begging Mary's pardon for saying so."

"If you really and truly are serious in your interest in the Merivales," said Mrs. Clifton, "you had better deepen it by going to see Cleeve. Cleeve is worth seeing from its oddness. Unless Mr. Lyndsay has *very* important business, I daresay he will take you there, and I will drive Mary home."

"I should like it very much."

"And I should be delighted," cried Frank, looking proud and pleased.

CHAPTER IV.

“A clear stream flowing with a muddy one,
Till, in its onward current, it absorbs
With swifter movement and in purer light
The vexed eddies of its wayward brother.”

TENNYSON.

MRS. CLIFTON went up to get ready. Alan said he would finish his letter, and Mary resumed her knitting. Frank turned over some books, then leant out of window.

Alan Sinclair from his letter-writing watched Mary, and shortly, laying down his pen, came towards her.

“I am so convinced,” he said, smiling, “of the truth of our theory—yours and mine, in opposition to your brother and Mrs. Clifton—about industry, that I really will learn to employ my fingers. I have been watching that magical stitch of yours, and I think I could do it. Will you let me try?”

Mary looked up with an amused smile.

“It is only common knitting,” she said.

“Common or uncommon, I should like to learn it. Now,” he continued, drawing a chair and placing it in front of her, “will you be so kind as to do the stitch slowly two or three times, and then I will try.”

She obeyed, and then placed the needles in his hand. Frank came from the window to look on in contemptuous curiosity.

After some minutes of intense application, two stitches were accomplished. He then looked up and inquired, "Shall I make a good knitter, do you think?"

Mary laughed—too much surprised to answer him.

"You will not give an opinion, I see. That is being very discreet. My beginning may be good; I confess I think it is; but who can tell what the end will be? What will this make when it is finished?"

"I suppose an old woman's shawl."

"Then I shall knit an old soldier's comforter. Can you direct me to a knitting shop, Miss Lyndsay?"

"If you don't take care," was Frank's reply, "Mary is such a fool, that she will think you are serious."

"She will think right. I am quite

serious. You know I have passed the age when I am afraid of being taken for a girl. Why should not a man use his fingers? I see no reason against it. Do you, Miss Lyndsay?"

"No, I suppose not," she said, hesitatingly; "but it is new for a man to work, is it not?"

"Far from it, I assure you. I have long been able to sew on a button, and a friend of mine can make button-holes, which I am told few young ladies can do. So I repeat, Miss Lyndsay, can you direct me to a knitting-shop?"

"I am a shop," said Mrs. Clifton, laughing, as she re-entered the room. I have all means and appliances for industry in that great box. Now, let us be going."

"When I see you again," Alan said, as he shook hands with Mary, "I hope you

will see how profitable your instructions have been. I mean to do great things."

When, in the evening, Mrs. Clifton and Alan Sinclair were alone, Mrs. Clifton made an eager inquiry concerning his opinion of Mary's beauty.

"As to beauty," he replied, "I don't think her beautiful."

"I hoped you did," she said, with disappointment. "I thought you seemed to admire her as I do."

"I cannot think her beautiful, because she has not beauty. Take away eyes, colouring, and countenance, and very little will remain."

"Take away a man's body, and very little will remain," said Mrs. Clifton, laughing.

"But as far as countenance goes I hope my admiration will satisfy you. Do human

beings ever remind you of things? Some people are like night; I suppose it is disrespectful to night to call it a thing, but you will know what I mean; they are rather awful beings; some are like moonlight, there is a charm in them, but a melancholy one; some——”

“And Mary is like sunrise, I suppose,” Mrs. Clifton interrupted, not very patient with theories; “yes, I see the likeness.”

“No, I did not mean sunrise.”

“Noon, then, or sunset, or summer, or spring, or sunshine, or what is it?—what time of day is Mary like?”

“You are so impatient. I was going to say that Miss Lyndsay reminds me of twilight. The morning not the evening twilight; morning conquering night. There is a dash of darkness about her, but such a light within that it conquers it. It is this

look that makes her face to me the most interesting I ever saw."

"Now you please me," said his hostess. "Not that I agree with your poetical fancies. There is no darkness, not one cloud, in Mary; that is why I adore her; but provided you sanction the fancy I have formed, I don't care on what grounds you form it."

"You ought to know better than I do. I may be wrong, but if I am wrong, then I do not admire her so much. Evening twilight faces and characters are very common; joyous dispositions saddened and subdued in the trials of life; but morning twilight, light and good *always* conquering darkness and evil, are not common. In fact, I never saw the struggle and the victory so clearly defined in any face as I do on Miss Lyndsay's."

Mrs. Clifton made a movement of

hands and eyes, such as matter-of-fact people make at fancies they cannot understand.

“How did your acquaintance with Miss Lyndsay begin?” Alan inquired, a short time afterwards.

“I took this house, you know, at Easter. The Sunday after I came I saw her at church, fell in love with her face, and, as my custom is on such occasions, made inquiries as to her connections and habits. I was told that she lived immured with a foolish mother and stern father, and that my attempts to draw her away from them would be unavailing. I am not troubled, however, with fear or shyness. I called on Mrs. Lyndsay, said I should be a neighbour for six months, spoke of my lonely life, and my fancy for her daughter, and made a request that she might occasionally visit me. Poor Mrs. Lyndsay,

who is a nonentity, was evidently at a loss how to answer me, thought it a pity to refuse, and did not dare to say yes. I always feel for trembling wives, so I instantly relieved her by begging to see Captain Lyndsay, and make my request in person. I suppose she saw that I would have my way, for she consented, and led the way to the lion's den. I never yet was refused by any man, and, as you may guess, I was victorious here. Captain Lyndsay has a stern look, but he is a gentleman, and though he frowned on my entry, I charmed him into mildness. He explained to me his reasons for keeping Mary aloof from general society ; reasons founded chiefly on pecuniary motives, but agreed that there are exceptions to every rule, and as I promised not to have balls and dinner-parties, and turn her head with gaieties she could never share again, he consented to allow me to make a darling of her as I wished. There

is my history—and now, what do you think of Cleeve? ”

“I did not dislike it.”

“I did not think you would. If the truth were known, I suspect you think Miss Merivale a beauty.”

“Do you ever have presentiments, Mrs. Clifton?”

“No, never. I have no imagination and no superstition; but if I had, what then?”

“If I believed in presentiments, I should say that these Merivales were in some way destined to cross my path in life.”

“Then I advise you to keep out of their way, for a black, spectral shadow they will cast across any path.”

“So I feel, that is, so I should feel if I were superstitious, which I am not.”

“Don’t be superstitious. It may be poetical, but it is very heathenish. Now tell me, shall you be at Hounslow all the summer?”

“I suppose so; we have heard nothing yet to the contrary.”

“Then when will you come to me again? Can you come on Monday?”

“I will willingly if I can; and I suppose I can.”

“I will try and have amusement for you, or pleasure of some kind.”

To this promise, Alan Sinclair made no objection, and Mrs. Clifton considered herself at liberty to provide entertainment at her pleasure.

CHAPTER V.

“Not learned, save in gracious, household ways.”

TENNYSON.

“I SAY Mary,” said Frank Lyndsay, as he sat at breakfast the following morning, with his mother and sister, “that was rather a nice chap we saw yesterday.”

“Oh! Frank, *he* was not a chap, surely.”

“Why, you fool, what do you think a chap is? A chap is a person, and I suppose he was a person.”

"I thought a chap was something to laugh at, and though he was very amusing, I saw nothing to laugh at in him."

"Oh! you admired him, did you?" cried the teasing brother. "I suppose you lost your heart to him."

Mary laughed.

"She never could have done that in one day," observed her mother, with warmth.

"Oh! yes, mother, girls do. I know a girl who lost her heart to a person after a very few hours' acquaintance," and he drew himself up with a slightly important air.

"Frank means himself, mother," said Mary, laughing. "He knows some very extraordinary young ladies, who have three or four hearts each, I am sure."

"You are extremely impertinent, Mary,

cried her brother, looking red and indignant; "and I am sure I don't know what you mean. The young ladies I know are worth three hundred demure fools like you."

"What did you say you had for luncheon, Mary?" asked Mrs. Lyndsay, suddenly; "a roast chicken, and what?"

"Cutlets, mother," answered Frank, "and uncommonly good ones."

"A roast chicken and cutlets. That sounds very nice, and I daresay cold meat besides."

"Oh! yes, every cold meat under the sun, and tart, and jelly, and grapes—a regular good luncheon. Mrs. Clifton must be as rich as Cræsus."

"I should not mind being rich like Mrs. Clifton," observed Mary.

"*Mind!* Law, bless you, Mary," exclaimed her brother, "what a fool

you are ! Who ever did mind being rich !”

“No,” said his mother, “I know I should like a roast chicken and jelly for luncheon very much.”

“In some ways,” Mary said, “it seems to me to be happier to be poor. Now, mother, if you were rich, I could not help you a bit, and then what should I do?”

“Why, what other girls do,” said Frank, “attend to your dress, and play on the pianoforte, and go to balls. I don’t believe there is another girl in Christendom who would live poked up here as you do, and never wish for a change. I sometimes think you were born a fool.”

The conversation was disturbed by the entrance of Captain Lyndsay. Some persons carry with them a sensation of discomfort ; from no ostensible cause a chill goes

before and follows after them. It was so with Captain Lynsday. He came in tall, grave, and cold. He was a fine-looking man, and had a refined air; but the refinement was oppressive. The small dining-room of a small house, which had been cheerful and sunny till he appeared, seemed to become narrow and confined. Frank sat up in his chair, silent and sulky. Mrs. Lyndsay felt a thousand grievances unfelt before, and, in the three minutes that followed his entrance, observed that the tea was weak, the toast was tough, the milk was thin, and the bread was stale.

With civility, yet still with a "snub," Captain Lyndsay requested her to leave him to find out the inevitable ills of his lot; and thus, unable to complain any more, she became silent.

Mary alone seemed unaffected by his pre-

sence. Some happy natures will not, or cannot, see the faults of those they love. Mary, happy in her home, did not feel that her father was selfish, her mother silly, and her brother ill-bred. Her own sweet, forbearing nature was reflected in each one, and gave them a charm they did not possess. Her father was especially dear to her, and it never occurred to her that he could be in fault. She knew, indeed, that conversation flagged in his presence; but this was but natural, she thought, when he was so superior to them all. She, like the rest of the family, stood in awe of him; but her fear was from the intense desire to please, not from any dread of his displeasure. He swayed her, as his iron will swayed all who approached him; but her submission was the ready yielding of a dutious daughter to a loving father.

In many respects people make their

own world. A happy nature makes happiness where a less gifted one would find misery. Mary's home was not strictly a happy one. Poverty and ill-assorted companions are the elements of much discomfort. If she moved happily through them, and brought them into harmony, it was from the magic of her own good nature.

Captain Lyndsay was an officer retired on half-pay. A severe wound had disabled him in early years, and precluded him from active service, and he married, and remained at home. In youth he had seen much, and profited by what he had seen, and the cultivation of his mind and the acquisition of knowledge, was the occupation and interest of his sedentary and lonely life. He had married for the sake of a lovely face, and had repented for the rest of his life. Without money, intellect, or education, his wife had no

claims to his respect, and a naturally selfish nature was made worse by marriage.

Extreme poverty, where there is a certain appearance to be kept up, is the touchstone of the character. A noble, generous disposition braces itself to bear, endures privations without repining, and accepts favours without shame. A proud but ignoble nature repines in secret, but prefers rather to endure than to be humbled by the reception of kindness, however willingly offered. Captain Lyndsay's character was of the latter sort. His poverty fretted his temper and hardened his heart, but, like the Spartan boy, he bore it outwardly with a calm brow. Many a pleasure he refused to his family because he would not be under an obligation he could not return, and he removed his residence from place to place lest too great intimacy with his neighbours should give an insight into his affairs.

His worst qualities have been brought forward, but it is not to be supposed he was without good ones. A more suitable companion in life might have made him another man. Unable to live for his wife, he lived for himself, and advancing years did not tend to counteract this propensity. Mrs. Lyndsay was a well-meaning, affectionate woman, without deep feeling, without strong principles, and without good sense. To her it was chiefly due that Captain Lyndsay looked on poverty as a moral ill. The petty cares and economies of a household are peculiarly distasteful to men's minds. Mrs. Lyndsay could not discover this, and while her want of management added to poverty, her want of sense presented it continually to her husband's mind as a grievous curse and fretting sore. He retreated from her more and more, leaving her to struggle alone, and she, in awe of him, and often in want of the

means of life, was a repining and unhappy woman.

Two children came to add to, or to lighten the cares of, this uncomfortable household. The son was like his mother; quicker in intellect, but deficient as she was in stamina of character. His handsome face and figure, of which he and she were alike proud, did not tend to elevate him. Good education and good principles might have given him the strength he wanted, but principles were not much accounted of in Captain Lyndsay's household. All went as their natures led them. With Captain Lyndsay, Frank was no favourite; with his mother a great one. In his father's presence Frank was sulky; over his mother he domineered.

Two years after Frank's birth, a daughter was born, and something of charm came to the house with the first smiles of the smiling infant. Mary inherited the character-

istics of both parents,—her mother's softness and her father's strength,—and bound the two together with some qualities peculiarly her own, a truthful nature and the sunshine of the happy heart. This sunshine consisted less in the high spirits common to most young people, than in a more inward and uncommon gladness; a kind of tempered brightness which shone on all things and brought all things to its own likeness.

Her father loved Mary more than all else in the world except himself. He loved her for *herself* in her own natural charm; and he loved her for *himself*, and fixed his hopes upon her. He swayed her with his iron will, and intended so to do, but he deceived himself and her by supposing his will must always be for her good. Her mother hung upon her. Since she had grown up, the cares of poverty had lessened in the house.

Mary shared them, allowed them, dwelt

upon them, almost turned them into pleasures. When a little girl, she had one day observed her mother's worn and anxious face, and inquiring into the cause, heard in reply that it was poverty. A further inquiry brought out the vexation of the moment. There was some needle-work to be done, and the over-worked housemaid had refused to do it.

“Oh! mamma, could I not help you?”—asked the child, eagerly.

Mrs. Lyndsay opened her eyes. To do the coarse house-work herself, or employ her child upon it, had never occurred to her. It was like a sudden light bursting in. She acquiesced, and the small child sat down to hem a large sheet.

Proud to be of use, and happy to please, the little girl worked with all her heart, and when she at length carried the fruits of her labours to her mother, she observed, “Oh! mamma, how nice it is to be poor!”

From that day's date a change took place in the house; order and peace began to appear. It was a new idea to Mrs. Lyndsay that it was no degradation to be poor; it was still more new that it was possible to lessen her household labours by sharing them. Too indolent and helpless to profit herself by her new discovery, she yet watched with complacency the pretty and handy efforts of her young daughter, and by her admiring gratitude encouraged her to persevere.

Thus Mary grew up, as Paley says of the bee, "so busy and so pleased." Everything came lightly and naturally to her hand. Nothing vexed, nothing oppressed. She pleased her father by cultivating her mind—she helped and pleased her mother by her orderly management of the house. She pleased others, and was happy herself. Many pitied her lot; but none who met the sweet smile of her face pitied *her*.

Mary, however, was no perfect character. She had been gifted with a good nature, and she followed the natural light which led her. Of a more religious view of life and duty she had not much thought, and, to say the truth, did not much like to have it forced upon her. She did not like grave thoughts, did not wish to hear of sorrow and death, wished to think well of all men, and if she felt harshly to any it was towards grave people. So, at least, had been the case; but she was now eighteen, and something more of thoughtfulness began to put forth its shoots.

CHAPTER VI.

“L’homme propose, mais Dieu dispose.”

Mrs. CLIFTON was a matchmaker. The excitement attending the occupation pleased her ; and it so happened, partly as it seemed from mere luck, and partly that her quick intuition into character had made her a prophet, that success had generally crowned her plans. Such being the case, she considered it almost as one of the appointed duties of her life.

It is difficult exactly to define the bounds

at which matchmaking begins. Not to have wishes is clearly impossible ; not to give assistance where a little assistance might cause a happy *denouement*, is almost as impossible ; yet, considering the changes and chances of mortal life, the perverseness of human beings, the waywardness of circumstances, the unforeseen events that thwart the best-formed hopes, the sad endings that sometimes attend marriages formed under the brightest auspices, the very least assistance becomes a matter of serious responsibility.

To plan unions may be to plan trials ; no thinking mind can therefore lightly assume the office ; but Mrs. Clifton's was a bright and active, not a thinking mind, and whenever the temptation arose she yielded to it.

Temptation in this case arose on the very day on which Alan Sinclair met Mary Lyndsay. The idea was suggested by its own fitness. There is an old nurse's saying, that

those who are destined to be united are alike, not mentally, but personally ; alike not perhaps in feature, but in some undefinable similarity of countenance or manner. An old nurse, without her usual large imagination, might have discovered a likeness between Alan and Mary. They both possessed that charm of countenance which no word but "sweet" describes ;—open, ingenuous, and loveable, the inner disposition shining on the face. His countenance was the more melancholy ; hers the more serene and sunny ; but with this difference the same words described them both.

But although this outward fitness was such, that had they been pointed out as betrothed lovers, the perfection of the union would have been owned by all ; there were other circumstances which made Mrs. Clifton's scheme a short-sighted one. Mary was penniless ! Alan

Sinclair was, comparatively speaking, poor. In her short interview with Captain Lyndsay, he had made her fully aware that he was no admirer of poverty. These facts were plain, and it required but little good sense to reason from them. There are minds, however, to whom plain facts do not present the appearance they do to the chief part of the world. Their wishes possibly excite the brain, and prevent the clear exercise of reason, or else a sunny temperament *will* see only what it wishes to see. To reason with such persons is utterly vain. It is perhaps no fault of theirs, but they do not see what is as clear as day. Mrs. Clifton was an extremely sensible woman in most respects, and yet her brain was liable to the distortion just described. If the plain fact, the danger of an attachment in this case, had been presented to her, her

answers would have been so many that it must have been overpowered. Mary's home was unsuited to her—an amiable husband must be a benefit—Alan was somewhat listless, and a cheerful wife was necessary to him.—Mary was used to poverty, Alan's prospects must improve.—Even allowing that poverty was an ill, yet what was poverty compared to happiness? So she would have answered, had she been called upon to reason. As it was, she pursued her way without much reflection, and without forming any clear conception of what poverty really was.

Disappointment awaited Mrs. Clifton's first efforts to bring Alan and Mary together.

“There,” she said, on the Tuesday morning following, as with some vexation she tossed a note to him, “I tried to procure you a pleasanter companion than

a middle-aged woman, and it is not my fault that I have failed."

Alan Sinclair took Mary's note and read it.

"MY DEAR MRS. CLIFTON,—

"It is very kind of you to ask me again. You may be sure I would come if I could, but I have so many things to do to-day, that I ought not. Thank you very much, and I am very sorry. Yours very affectionately,

"MARY LYND SAY."

"That poor girl works like a slave at home," Mrs. Clifton observed, in the same vexed tone.

"She does not look like a slave," said Alan, smiling; and it is quite new, is it not, for you to call her 'that poor girl'?"

"Very true. That is a just reprimand.

It was my vexation that spoke. She is no slave, and if she works, it is with all her heart."

"And then she is all the happier. But now tell me, Mrs. Clifton, if at least there is no indiscretion in my question, what do you mean by work? What kind of work can a pretty young lady like Miss Lyndsay do?"

"I am afraid. Men are so odd. If one comes to details, one is sure to destroy some charm."

"If there is any charm to be destroyed, surely the sooner it is done the better. But, indeed, Mrs. Clifton, however odd men may be,—and it is not for me to say they are not odd, if you say they are,—I do not think, in practice, any sensible man objects to a useful woman."

"Well, I will try the experiment. What shall you say when I tell you

that Mary not only makes her father's shirts and her mother's gowns, but can bake loaves and make a pudding,—can, and does. In fact, that, at the early age of seventeen or eighteen, she is a notable housewife."

"I shall say that I admire her extremely."

"Then I am glad I told you. Come," she continued, laughing, "give me the pleasure of hearing you say that you are disappointed she cannot come."

"If I do say it, you will set me down as being in love. If men are odd, I know what women are."

"I will not, indeed. But no matter. You have said enough. You have owned it."

"I do confess," he said, smiling, "that I had some wish to make further obser-

vations on her face. To see whether your theory was right or mine."

"Yes, yes, I understand," she cried, and turned away her eyes, sparkling with delight in the hopes his words excited.

Late in the afternoon she invited Alan Sinclair to walk with her to Cleeve. It was her intention to return Miss Merivale's visit.

As they approached the gates of Cleeve, Mary Lyndsay issued from them. She paused a moment, on perceiving who were approaching, before she went forward to meet them.

"You treacherous truant," Mrs. Clifton exclaimed, catching hold of her, and although, in the high road, unable to refrain from kissing her rose-coloured cheeks, "is this the way you serve me? Can you expect me to pardon this?"

"I have indeed been busy all day," Mary said, eagerly, "you *must* know I would come if I could."

"Are you going home, Mary? We will walk with you. That is, if Captain Sinclair is not tired."

He had paused a little aloof, but came and shook hands with Mary, acquiescing willingly in the proposed extension of their walk.

"Now, tell me, Mary," Mrs. Clifton said, drawing Mary's arm caressingly within her own, "what have you been doing all day?"

"Oh, Mrs. Clifton, a great many things. It would not interest you to hear."

"This visit to Cleeve! was that a part of the proposed business?"

"Yes," Mary replied, reluctantly. "I have been trying to do it for many days,

and last night I felt I *dared* not put it off any more."

"Is it that Mr. Merivale, of the many characters, that keeps you in such order?" Alan asked, laughing at the tone in which he spoke.

"Oh! no," she said, quickly, "I meant only my own conscience. I know I ought to go and see that poor old woman, but I don't like it; and I put it off till the thought of her haunts me even in my sleep. I know I am very wrong."

"How was she to-day?" Mrs. Clifton inquired.

"Very ill—worse than ever. I guessed she was worse by Mr. Merivale's look when I met him on Sunday, and that made me feel I must go. Miss Merivale says"—Mary paused with a look of awe.

"What, my dear child, what does she say?"

"That she will soon die.

"Well, and that will be a happy release out of all her pains. Don't fret yourself. You have done all you can. Now put her out of your head for the present."

"Yes," Mary said, thankfully, with a sigh of relief.

"How pretty your garden looks!" she exclaimed, as a few minutes afterwards they came in front of the cottage, a long, low, trellised house, covered with creepers, with a small garden in front. "And what roses! you must give me some."

Mary laughed, and shook her head.

"My dear child, if I had a million flowers of my own, it would not prevent my coveting those of my neighbours;

but, as it happens, my roses are all gone. I must have a bunch, that red bunch, I pray."

Mary gathered and brought the bunch she spoke of.

"And now one for Captain Sinclair, Mary."

"Should you like some flowers?" Mary asked, turning to him with a smile.

"I should indeed," he said, and leaned his arms upon the gate, watching her, while she stooped to gather them.

At this moment Captain Lyndsay heard voices in his garden, and came to his window to look out. As Mary gave the flowers into the stranger's hand, the sunset was falling brightly upon her, and a father's eyes and a father's heart possibly exaggerated the charm of her appearance and countenance, and the look of admiration with which the young man

received her gift. He knit his brows, and retreated from the window.

“Who was that, Mary?” inquired her father, opening the window, and calling to her, when Mrs. Clifton had departed.

“Mrs. Clifton and a friend of hers, father,” she replied, hastening to him.

“And a friend of yours, I think. I saw you give him flowers,” and her father looked searchingly at her. “Who is her friend?”

“She calls him Captain Sinclair. I have only seen him once before. Do come out, father, it is so fine to-night?”

“No thank you, my love. I have a twinge of rheumatism.”

“I went to Cleeve,” Mary continued, the shadow falling over her face. “Mrs. Merivale is very ill to-day.”

“That was a good girl, Mary; I will come and have a turn with you.” And

he joined her in the garden, and as he slowly walked up and down, lightly leaning on her shoulder for support, he poured out for her amusement some of the stores of knowledge gathered during the studies of the day. A chance passenger saw the sight, the stately father looking fondly down into his daughter's face, and murmured :—

“Some feelings are to mortals given,
With less of earth in them than Heaven.”

But how little could the passenger have imagined the sordid and earthly feelings at that moment debasing the father's love!

For his twinge of rheumatism, Captain Lyndsay, the following morning, called in the aid of the apothecary, and this individual, being conversant in all the affairs of the neighbourhood, was able to give him the information he desired regarding

the friend of Mrs. Clifton. He ruminated upon it during the day, and only came to a final decision in the evening.

After dinner this note arrived for Mary.

“MY ADORED MARY,—

“I have been alone all this rainy day, and I ask it of your charity to come to me to-morrow. I hold household affairs in high estimation, but every dog should have his day, and let to-morrow be my day.

“Yours affectionately,

“M. C.”

Mary put the note into her father's hand, and looked at him for consent.

He gathered up all the floating thoughts of the day into one moment's intense reflection, then made his decision.

“I have no objection, Mary, go if it pleases you.”

If it be asked on what grounds his decision was formed, they were singular ones. He had a conviction that in allowing her to go without restraint, that thing which he dreaded would arise. Mary would form an attachment. He felt the conviction with a strength approaching to certainty. But the reflections of the day had suggested to him this worldly wisdom. It was barely possible that one like Mary would love one like Mr. Merivale, while yet in the freshness of her youth and gladness. But a disappointed heart is more easily led to receive the devoted though unwelcome love of another. "Let Mary, then," was his argument, "take the common chances of life in this matter. Perhaps a certain amount of unhappiness may be necessary to bring forth a great good."

So stated, the heartless coldness of the

argument is very apparent. But, strange to say, it assumed no such appearance in Captain Lyndsay's eyes. He supposed himself, on the contrary, to be acting and planning for her welfare, and if his waking dreams were visited that night with any defined feeling, it was with a certain complacency in his paternal foresight and wisdom.

CHAPTER VII.

“ There, at the foot of yonder nodding beech,
That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,
His listless length at noontide would he stretch,
And pour upon the brook that babbles by.”

GRAY.

“ I THOUGHT you said you were alone !”
Mary exclaimed, in some surprise, as she
sat working with Mrs. Clifton ; that lady
having, in her conversation, alluded to Alan
Sinclair as being in the house.

“ And you suspect that I have inveigled
you here under a false pretence of charity,”

said Mrs. Clifton, laughing. "Is it no so? But no, Mary, I would not do that. I was alone yesterday, and had many fears I should be alone to-day. Captain Sinclair went early, and was afraid he should not have leave to come back. He did come, however; at ten last night; rode over in the dark. Was not that a pretty compliment to pay to a middle-aged woman?"

"I suppose he feels as I do?" Mary began, eagerly — then stopped, laughed, blushed, and said, "There are some things one ought not to say *to* a person; but I know you know what I meant, dear Mrs. Clifton."

"My dear child, if you mean that you are very fond of me, and think me pleasant company, I am very much obliged to you. I hope you did not mean that you like me better than young people. I hope you did

not mean, for instance, that you are sorry Captain Sinclair came back."

"Oh! no, indeed," Mary said with honest warmth, "he amused me extremely the other day."

"That is right. He is a great favourite of mine, and I like to have my favourites appreciated. He is good, and to a certain extent clever, and, though perhaps a little whimsical, I like him the better for it. I like odd people, don't you, Mary?"

"No, not much," she replied.

"Don't you? I must have that out with you some day. But now here comes Captain Sinclair."

"Has he gone on with his knitting?" Mary asked, laughing.

"We will hear what he says. Captain Sinclair, Miss Lyndsay wishes to know if, after all your professions of industry, you have accomplished anything worth showing her?"

There was a touch of sarcasm in Mrs. Clifton's voice, and Alan slightly coloured as he replied,

"Not yet, but I mean to do it. The stitch puzzled me when I came to try it alone, but I said I would learn it, and I shall and will."

"I allowed Captain Sinclair to explain himself, Mary, because I wished to hear what he would say. But now listen to my story. He made a tremendous fuss about the needles, and the wool, and the shade of the wool. He turned my drawer upside-down and inside-out before he could be satisfied. He made a great fuss about my beginning his work and "starting him." I was very amiable. I was really glad to see him so interested about anything. I did all he required. Well. He then knitted half a row, laid aside his work, and from that hour has never thought of it again. And when you

know Captain Sinclair better, Mary, you will know that this is a picture of his life. Perpetual whims, violent and unaccountable fancies coming and passing away, and leaving no trace behind."

"What makes you say that, Mrs. Clifton?" he asked, colouring deeply, and with some sharpness. "Fickle and inconstant! you make me out a pretty character indeed."

"I only say what everybody who observes you must say. Constant enough in great matters, but much given to have whims, and to let whims drop. Witness; to my certain knowledge, projects to learn drawing, geology, and German were formed this spring; rose up and fell down; flat, never to rise again."

"If things bore me, I give them up," he said in a vexed tone; "but we need not entertain Miss Lyndsay with an anatomical examination of my character. Notwithstanding what Mrs. Clifton says, Miss Lyndsay, I

have made up my mind to learn how to knit, and I am coming to you this moment for another lesson."

He fetched the large knitting-pins, and drawing a chair opposite Mary's chair, placed himself upon it. But his arrangements were scarcely completed before the door was thrown open, and "Dr. and Mrs. Rowley" were announced.

He drew back his chair, tossed his needles away, and very indignantly asked Mrs. Clifton "Who are these?"

"Country neighbours," she replied, smiling. "Never mind them. Please yourself."

With this permission, Alan Sinclair returned to Mary; though with a discreet alteration in the position of his seat, and no further allusion to the knitting lesson.

Some French writer has divided the world into two classes, those who think, and those who amuse. Not a very fair

division. It may better be divided into two other classes, those who speak, and those who like to hear others speak. There are a few, somewhat rare in the busy world, who are more pleased to scrutinize the characters, and draw forth the opinions of others, than to deliver themselves of their own thoughts. They are valuable people, and though, when possessed of no other gifts apt to be overlooked, have, if gifted with powers of their own, a peculiar charm. Alan Sinclair belonged to the class. An insatiable curiosity regarding the inner life of man possessed his mind, rising on some occasions into an interest that was even intense.

It was not often, however, that such occasions occurred. His curiosity was of a fastidious kind, and not easily excited. But Mary was beginning to excite it

now. There was a something in the expression of her face, so different, so opposed to the frank simplicity of her manner, that he was seized with a longing to penetrate the region of her thoughts and opinions.

To this, therefore, he devoted himself while Mrs. Clifton entertained her guests.

While engaged in talking to her, his attention was, however, caught by an authoritative announcement on the part of Dr. Rowley, that serious troubles were anticipated in India, and that the —— regiment of cavalry had received orders to sail.

“That is mine,” he observed to Mary, in a low voice.

“And is it true?” she asked, with pity in her tone.

“It may be true some day perhaps, but it certainly is not true to-day. Let

the gentleman enjoy himself, however. He seems so happy with his piece of news, far be it from me to deprive him of it!"

"And have you the prospect of going to India before you?"

"If my regiment goes, I suppose; you seem to pity me?"

"Yes, I do," she replied, heartily. "I daresay it is stupid, but I never can fancy happiness out of England, and India is so far away. I pity your family too."

"I have no family," he said, sadly.

"Oh! I beg your pardon," Mary exclaimed, with a blush, shocked at herself, and still more shocked at what he said.

"Why beg my pardon so earnestly? How could you guess? Most people have fathers, or mothers, or brothers, or sisters, and I had once, but I have none now."

Mary was of that age and temper when melancholy things shock to a degree that makes it quite impossible to express the sympathy they excite. She felt an unspeakable pity for the state of things his words described, but she did not know how to say so, and with cast-down eyes kept silence.

He saw exactly what she felt, and changed the subject.

“What is Dr. Rowley saying now?” he observed, with a smile. “It must be something very awful, by the delight I catch in his tone.”

“You are quite right, Mrs. Clifton,” were Dr. Rowley’s words. “Sons are nothing but a worry, and it is a happy exemption to be free from them. They are a worry if they turn out ill, and if they turn out well, a still greater worry and care. I have a poor friend, for

instance, whose son is in this regiment; my news will be a thunderbolt to him. All his heart is in this son, and what can he expect? If his son escapes the perils of the war, if he ever returns, what will he bring back but a body sinking from the effects of climate; disease and death at work upon it?"

"That is not true, is it?" Mary asked with some indignation.

"Not the least, I should hope, with proper care. But I really must interfere to prevent this poor friend from being crushed by the thunderbolt;" and rising, and joining Mrs. Clifton and her party, he modestly stated his belief that Dr. Rowley was misinformed, giving his name and position for his authority.

But Dr. Rowley was too much attached to the news he had picked up to part from it easily. With stately dignity he assured

Alan he was in the right, as he would shortly find, adding, "And if you have any reason, from health or other circumstances, to wish for an exchange, I advise you to set about it without delay."

"I have no reason at present, thank you."

"I thought it possible you had," was the reply; and it was given with a drily sarcastic tone, which suggested the probability that, even through a thick skull and a full wig, he had been making observations behind him.

Alan slightly coloured, and, returning to Mary, said, "He had done what he could, and if the friend died it was no fault of his. Is Dr. Rowley a friend or acquaintance of yours?" he asked.

"No. My father does not wish to make many acquaintances in this neighbourhood."

“Except as to hearing news, I should say you had no great loss there—but, in general, are you not sorry? Do you not wish to see more of society?”

“I like Mrs. Clifton,” she replied, warmly. “I was very happy before she came, but now I sometimes wonder what I shall do when she is gone.”

“That is the fatal teaching of experience, a very painful teaching to my mind. I sometimes think that, rather than be under the pain of perpetually losing what one has grown to like, it would be better to live like a good dull hermit, caring for nobody.”

“And thoroughly selfish,” Mary said, laughing.

“No, no. My hermit should be a very charitable hermit, only he should be saved from the pains and temptations of attachments. I sometimes wonder,” he continued, with the musing seriousness which occasion-

ally overspread his countenance, betraying the tendency of his mind and character, "whether a life of such a kind would not really be the best, guarding us from caring too much for any earthly thing."

"But, surely——" Mary began, with wondering eagerness; there she paused, however, and laughed, adding, "But I need not argue, I am sure you do not really mean what you say."

"I do though—at least, I often do. Considering that preachers tell us we ought only to like in moderation, which is pretty nearly impossible, and that if one does like a thing one is almost sure to lose it, I often think it would be wisest to keep out of the way of attachments altogether."

"I would not have such thoughts for all the world," was Mary's eager reply.

"But if they will intrude, what can one do?"

“Fight against them. I will while I have power to fight at all.”

“Do,” he replied, smiling at the warmth and eagerness she unconsciously displayed. “In your hands I believe it will be as good a fight as ever was fought. But how far we have wandered from Dr. Rowley! He is glancing at the clock, and sees he has been here three quarters of an hour, and begins to be conscious that there may be too much even of his precious self. Yes. Now an apology, and now he is off.”

Mrs. Clifton was always charming to her acquaintance. It was a pleasure to her to be so; but this morning she was unusually charming, and with her eager sympathy in his communications, detained her visitor beyond the common bounds of a morning visit.

With a like interest to that in which an author follows the heroes and heroines of his

tale, she watched the development of her matrimonial plot. She saw plainly that on Alan's side the feelings that might end in the result she desired were excited, and though she owned she saw no like symptoms in Mary, yet it needed little imagination to predict that they would shortly arise. Mary had seen too little of good society to be otherwise than struck with the mere outward charm of manner the mingling in good society gives ; but Alan's manners had something beyond this, for they were the expression of his character, and his character, though far from faultless, was one to win on a young girl's mind, especially on a mind formed like Mary's.

Some people are born good. Not that they have any exemption from the general weakness, infirmities, and corruptions of human nature, but that their natural taste so impels them to delight in what is good, that they

are unassailable to the common temptations of man:

Alan Sinclair was thus born good ; amiable in disposition, and something more than amiable in the tone of his thoughts and frame of his mind. Circumstances had fostered the natural bent. A singular blight which sometimes falls on families had left him at fifteen without a home and without family ties, and under the influence of the sadness occasioned by his losses, the thoughtfulness of his mind had taken a higher flight.

The same circumstances, however, which in some respects were favourable to his character, in others were prejudicial to it. He was a dreamer. Mrs. Clifton, with her quick sight, perceived the fault of his disposition. His thoughts were good, so were his desires, so were his impulses ; but there he rested. He had no one watching his career, therefore no adventitious excitement, and he had not

in himself sufficient energy to bring the good that was in him to bear fruit. He dragged along the path of existence—good, but listless ; serious in his thoughts, but idle in his life ; not doing what he ought not to do, but leaving undone much of what he ought to have done.

So had passed year after year, for he was seven or eight and twenty. The good nature remained unspoiled ; a little running to waste from want of culture, but still ready to shoot forth whenever anything kindled it into action.

CHAPTER VIII.

“Tis time this heart should be unmoved,
Since others it has ceased to move ;
Yet though I cannot be beloved,
Still let me love.”

BYRON.

ONE morning, three or four weeks after the date of the last chapter, as Mary was sitting at work with her mother, a note was put into her hands. It was towards the end of July ; the weather was very hot, and Mary was busily employed in making a light muslin gown for her mother.

"You can't go to Mrs. Clifton to-day, my dear Mary," cried her mother with a grumble in her voice. "I really shall die if I wear this stuffy gown any longer. That is," she added good-naturedly, "unless you wish to go very much."

"Oh, mother!" Mary exclaimed, opening wide her eyes, and her cheeks becoming crimson.

"What's the matter? Good gracious! Mary, what's the matter?" called her mother, nervously.

"Oh, mother!" repeated Mary again, gazing at Mrs. Lyndsay with a look of fear and dismay.

"My dear Mary!" she said with very natural fretfulness, "why can't you speak? You terrify one with those strange looks."

"Oh! dear mother, I beg your pardon, but what shall I do? I never *can* do it. This is a note from Mr. Merivale. Oh!

mother, what shall I do?" She put the note into her mother's hand. It was this:—

"MY DEAR MISS LYND SAY,

"My mother is dying, and has expressed a strong wish to take leave of you. It is a sad scene for you to come to, but your kind heart will not refuse. Her hours are numbered, there must be no delay. I grieve to ask it of you, but ask it still.

"Yours,

"HUBERT MERIVALE."

Mrs. Lynd say had expected a different request. She knew her husband's thoughts, and so far shared them, that poverty's trials had made her think to be rich must be to be happy. Still, her softer nature gave her some shrinkings, and it was with relief she found the note a matter of death, and not of life.

“ *Must* I go, mother?” Mary asked, earnestly.

“ Well, Mary, I am sure I don’t know. I should not like it myself, that I confess ; but I think your father would wish you to go. Shall I ask him ?”

“ Oh ! no, mother. I know all the while I must. I should never be happy again all my life long if I did not. Her poor face would haunt me. Of course I must go. But oh ! mother, how dreadful ! Oh, mother !” she added, seizing hold of her mother’s arm, “ do you, think I must see her die ?”

“ That of course I don’t know, Mary. Perhaps not ; we will hope not, at any rate, for it would be very disagreeable. Shall I come with you ?” she inquired, raising herself reluctantly in her arm-chair.

“ No, thank you, mother. I must be quick, quick, or perhaps she will be *dead*, and then I shall never be happy again. Oh mother ! to

think there are such things in the world. But I must go." And in less than two minutes she was flying along under the scorching sun to Cleeve.

She flew along that she might not think ; her terror increasing every moment, her heart throbbing so wildly that in calmer moments that in itself would have frightened her.

She flew along till she entered the gates of Cleeve, but the first breath of the cool damp air in the avenue, grateful after the scorch of the road, seemed to lay its calming hand upon her, and slackening her steps, and drawing her breath more quickly, she proceeded onward to the house. Her terrors suddenly left her ; she seemed to have entered into a new atmosphere, and with that entrance to have found the power to endure.

And such, in some degree, is the in-

fluence of sorrow itself. Dread it, shudder at its approach as we may, yet once within its influence, there is something in the calmness of all around that speaks to the heart of man. Bringing him out of the glare and noise of the world, it wakes in him a higher nature, and teaches him that there are more things in Heaven and earth than he had dreamed of.

Mr. Merivale was waiting for Mary at the door. It was not the cold Mr. Merivale of her fancy—every feature spoke of life, the life of bitter anguish, and the grasp that wrung her hand made her trembling spirit shrink back appalled. He attempted to speak, but a convulsive movement of his lips showed the effort, and its failure.

“I am very sorry for you!” she said, looking tearfully and kindly at him. “I know how unhappy you must be.”

He seemed ashamed of his weakness, made a violent effort, and then spoke calmly.

“It is the only being in the world who ever has loved, or ever can love me; she is passing away, and I am desolate.”

“Oh! Mr. Merivale,” Mary said, gently, ‘why do you say that?’”

“It is the truth. But why do I linger here? Time presses—let me take you to her.”

She followed him through the dreary hall and up the stairs. On the first landing he paused, and said, compassionately—

“It is a sad scene for you.”

“It is sad,” Mary replied, in a tremulous voice. “But if she wishes it, I am glad to come.”

“I knew you would,” and something

almost like a soft smile stole over his features.

Mary was not heeding him now. Her thoughts were all in that chamber of death, which for the first time she was to enter. She quailed at the fears of fancy that assailed her.

Mr. Merivale led her into the room formerly described. It opened into Mrs. Merivale's bed-room; here all was as it had been; close and cheerless, but stagnantly still. Miss Merivale was sitting on a chair near the half-opened door, reading. Her countenance was not graver than usual, there were no terrors on her brow.

She was perhaps wise to fortify herself against the trials that were coming by this moment of calm meditation, yet most would have said what Mary silently said, "Reading! with death so near." And

yet, though Mary shrank from her composure, it re-assured and strengthened her.

"I have brought Miss Lyndsay, Catherine," Mr. Merivale said, and Miss Merivale laid aside her book and came forward to Mary.

"It is kind of you to come, Miss Lyndsay," she said, gently. "I know it must be painful to you, but believe me, such scenes are healthful. They teach us what life is, and how vain its dreams must be."

"Why are you here, Catherine?" Mr. Merivale impatiently interrupted her. "Is my mother, does she rest?"

"She begged me to leave her alone," was Catherine's reply. "She knows that in the dark valley other help than ours is required."

"Tell her Miss Lyndsay is here," he said, in the same impatient tone; "or stay, I will do it."

He entered softly, but there was a look on his face as if it was an effort and an agony to see her.

He returned, unable to speak; but with his hand he motioned to Mary to enter.

Alone. Was she to enter *alone*? She paused, trembling; but if either of her companions understood her feelings, they did not assist her.

"She expects you, Miss Lyndsay," Miss Merivale said, and Mary entered alone.

Her first footsteps were fearful and slow, but at the sight of the dying woman her terrors passed away. Was this death? Every look of pain and sorrow had left the marble features. A window was open, and the light fell, and a soft wind played upon the bed. All was white, and fresh, and bright. Never

had she seen the living Mrs. Merivale so little an object of dread.

She approached, and the smile that met her was angelic.

Touched, she knew not how or why, tears fell fast from her eyes, and she stooped over the dying woman, as once before she had done, and pressed her lips with a kiss of affection on her brow.

"You have been like a daughter to me, Miss Lyndsay," Mrs. Merivale said, in faint, sweet tones, stretching out her hand to clasp Mary's hand. "God bless you for it now, and for ever and ever! Amen."

The fervency of the voice awakened Mary's quick conscience. She thought of how little she had done, how much she had neglected to do. Her omissions seemed now terrible in her eyes.

"I have done nothing," she said,

weeping. "I wish I had. I wish I deserved your blessing."

"Will you do something for me yet?" the whispering voice asked with eagerness.

"I will indeed. Tell me what I can do?"

There was a pause, then, as if gathering up all her strength, the dying woman said,

"You have been kind to me, Miss Lyndsay, will you, for my sake, be kind to my son? Few love him, few care for him, and he, in bitterness, loves neither God nor man. But your smile cheers him and saves him; will you be kind when I am gone? Will you have pity on him, as you have had pity on me?"

She looked wistfully up into Mary's face.

"I will indeed. I cannot do much,

but I will do all I can," and as Mary spoke, she thought of the many times she had escaped from his presence, the many times she had said she hoped never to see him more. She *would* be kind, the future should not be like the past.

"God bless *you*, and have mercy on *him*!"

As she spoke, Mrs. Merivale's grasp of Mary's hand relaxed, and she closed her eyes. For a moment Mary thought death was at hand, and with difficulty restrained a cry; but the calm, sweet expression returned to the face, and the breathing sounded as soft as an infant's. She paused, in expectation that something more would be said, but after some minutes of silent waiting, she saw that her task was done, and reverently and gently pressing her lips on the cold cheek, she stole away.

Mr. Merivale was awaiting her, gazing vacantly from the window.

Miss Merivale had resumed her seat, but not her book.

Mary went up to her, trembling and agitated, and held out her hand.

"I grieve for you so much, Miss Merivale," she said, in a broken voice. "Her loss will be hard to bear."

"Not so, Miss Lyndsay," she replied in her usual soft tones. "Much rather I rejoice to see her spirit released from the bonds of this weary flesh. God is merciful in taking her to Himself."

It was truth, and Mary felt it, yet she shrank back.

There was no echo in Mr. Merivale's face to his sister's words. The tearless eyes and compressed lips spoke of agony beyond the power of tears or words. Mary had more of sympathy with that look. She turned to him, and, partly prompted by the moment's compassion,

partly by her promise so lately given, held out her hand, and, with a pitying look in her sweet countenance, raised her eyes to his.

He held it for a moment, and gazed at her; a faint glow swept over his cheek. Then, sighing, he averted his head, released her, and said, abruptly, "We need detain Miss Lyndsay no longer, Catherine. If there should be the slightest change, call me, I shall be *there*;" and he pointed from the window to the avenue.

"There will be none till evening," was Miss Merivale's reply, after gazing, for a moment, into the adjoining room, and with a few words of thanks to Mary, more earnest than usual, her companions were dismissed.

Her dreaded task was over, and with less, far less of terror than she had antici-

pated. Sad and subdued, yet with the soothing sense of having done what she could, Mary accompanied Mr. Merivale. They walked in silence. Mary knew not what to say, or how to speak a word of comfort, but she forced her footsteps to move slowly, that she might not seem to hasten from him.

When they reached the lodge-gate, Mary paused, and held out her hand. ‘I must wish you good-bye now, Mr. Merivale. I wish I could say that I hoped you would soon be happier; but I feel how useless it would be.’

“Useless, indeed,” he said, sadly, holding her hand and gazing at her.

Mary longed to withdraw it; but her kind thoughts towards him made her unwilling even to seem to be annoyed. She remained passive. It was not many moments, but it seemed a long time

“ Mary !” he said, at last, suddenly and abruptly, “ do you know how I love you ?”

She drew back with a start, not of bashfulness, but of fear and dismay.

“ Have I terrified you ?” he said, sadly, “ forgive me !”

“ Oh ! Mr. Merivale,” she said, trembling from head to foot, “ I don’t mean to be unkind. You must forgive me that I was startled.”

“ No wonder. It is not for such as me to speak of love. Yet, hear me, Mary. I love you more than aught in heaven or on earth ; even more than her who gave me life, and whose life is there ebbing away. I love you and have long loved you. It has been hidden here”—laying his hand on his breast—“ but I have told it now.”

"I am sorry, very sorry," she said, raising her eyes softly and tearfully, "I wish I could say more; but I cannot."

"It is a strange time to speak of love," he said. "I had not meant to do it; yet, after all, when could I need a voice of kindness more than now? Hear me, Mary, and let me speak."

She stood still. Not for worlds would she have denied him any request but one, on that day.

"Do not think I spoke because I had a hope. Light and darkness have more to unite them, than you and I. But you do not know me, Mary. I am not, I was not always at least what I seem. I once was young—and even you, Mary, might not have recoiled from me. I once was young as others are, and full of hopes of life and dreams of this world's joy. But I loved, and a woman broke my heart.

I loved"—he paused, and his countenance, that lifeless face, kindled into a strange beauty as the fervour of his first affection seemed to return and enliven it—"How shall I tell you how I loved? I gave her all; I had not one thought, one talent, one possession that was not laid at her feet, I loved, worshipped, adored, God saw my idolatry, and scathed it. After three years I woke, and found that I had wasted my heart on a deceiver. She had never loved—she deceived and stung me. Then, in my despair, I vowed I would never love woman more; but I broke that vow when I saw you, Mary."

His voice had risen to fierceness. The contrast made the last words more inexpressibly soft and touching. They wrung Mary's heart; but, before she could collect her thoughts to address him, he went on in a calmer tone:—

“I have told you this that you might know me better. How should you, how could you love what I *am* ! But what I was ; ah ! Mary, once I should not have been unworthy even of you ; and now, oh ! say but this, that you scorn me not—say that if this frozen nature melted away, and the old days when I could love returned again, you would, or might listen to me—say but one word, if not of hope, yet not of despair, and you shall yet see what your eyes shall not believe—from my mother’s ashes shall rise up a son on whom her blessings and your love might not unworthily rest. Stay one moment,” he added, “before you speak. Mary, I know you well. On your blessed nature, that grace of God has fallen that you love to comfort, to soothe, to bless. You do not know yourself as I know you. It is woman’s happiest office to minister to man ; the more needing her help the happier for her. Mary

dearest, beloved, deny not to yourself and me what may make both blest, may save a man from misery, and a soul from everlasting despair. Now, Mary, speak," and he grasped her hand and gazed into her face, less with passion than with the wistfulness of that despairing soul of which he spoke.

He did know her well. A few years later, and his words might not have been in vain—nay, even now trembling as she was, so intense was her desire to give happiness, so intense her dread to give pain, even now it was possible she might have been won, had not the first links of another affection already, though unconsciously, wound themselves round her heart. She knew not what it was that withheld the one word, "not of despair," which he had implored her to speak, but withheld it was, and with the grasp of iron.

Her eyes were streaming with tears, and her voice was broken as she attempted to

answer him, but the purport of her words never faltered. It would be vain to strive to convey them ; so disjointed the sentences, so incoherent the language, so pitiful to him, so reproaching to herself, and yet so firm and resolved in shutting out hope for ever. Though the words were gentle and her countenance soft, there was no wavering. How it was done she wondered afterwards, but it was done. There could be no mistake. She could *never* love him.

“ I am answered,” he said, his eyes losing their brightness, and his countenance its life. “ It has been but one moment’s dream, and it has vanished for ever. If my dull, cold lips could say it, they would say, God bless you, Mary ; but they have no life nor power to bless. Farewell !” He still held her hand, as if loth to sever the link of human sympathy that for this half hour had bound him to his kind, but Mary could bear it no more.

She gently loosened herself from his grasp and said, "I will say it to you. God bless you, Mr. Merivale, and give you the comfort I would give if I could, but cannot. Forgive me!"

So saying she hurried away, swift as an arrow, down the scorching road to her home.

She was not out of sight when a message was brought to him that his mother had called for him.

"Almighty God!" he said—he who never prayed—as he turned his footsteps to the house, "Give me courage to hide from my mother my despair."

CHAPTER IX.

“Once betrayed from childly faith,
Man is conscious man for ever.”

R. M. MILNES.

“OH! mother, mother!” exclaimed Mary rushing wildly into the little drawing-room and putting her arms round her mother’s neck.

Mrs. Lyndsay was still reposing in the arm-chair, though to satisfy her conscience a small muslin frill with a needle and thread in it was on the little table beside her. She

roused herself compassionately on Mary's entrance.

"Oh! my dear Mary," she cried, "is she dead?"

"*She*—oh! mother, I had forgotten her," and, withdrawing her arms, Mary sat down and burst into tears.

"Good gracious, Mary, you frighten me to death with your ways to-day. What is the matter now?"

"He asked me, mother, to be his wife. Mr. Merivale did! Mr. Merivale, mother!"

"What a very odd time to make a proposal!" observed Mrs. Lyndsay, her thoughts for the moment entirely occupied with that idea. "I never heard of such a thing."

"Oh! mother, he is so miserable!" and Mary wept bitterly.

"Miserable about what?" she asked eagerly. "What did you say?"

Mary ceased to weep, and looked at her mother in astonishment. "Oh! mother, what could I say? I do not love Mr. Merivale. I never could—never, never. I was obliged to tell him so."

"Mercy upon us, Mary; then what's to be done? Your father will never forgive you!"

"My father—does he know?"

"He guessed it all along, Mary; and he does build upon it—oh! so much—good gracious me! I don't know what ever he will say."

"My father would never wish me to be unhappy," Mary said, confidingly. "And oh! mother, to be that gloomy Mr. Merivale's wife! I must have died. Not," she added, her quick conscience reproaching her, "that I feel like that now. He was so different to-day. But still,—but still,—to be his wife! Oh, how dreadful!"

“Just tell me all about it,” said her mother, her desire to hear overcoming her dread of her husband’s displeasure.

Very simply Mary narrated the facts of what had passed; but when she attempted to speak of what he had said, her agitation returned, and her tears fell in torrents; the thought of his miserable countenance broke her heart.

“Oh! mother,” she said, “how hard it is that people cannot like those who love them! I would give the world to like him, but I cannot. Even now, though I pity him so much, I cannot feel it *possible* that I could. Is it often so, mother?”

“Pretty often,” was Mrs. Lyndsay’s reply. “They say nobody marries the person they like best, but I know some do, because I did. But it does not matter, Mary, it all comes to the same thing in the end. I should have been

quite as happy, sometimes I think happier, if I had married a much older man than your father, who liked me very much; but he was very ugly, and I did not think the same then."

"Mother, will you tell my father?"

"Not for twenty pounds, Mary. I should not dare do it. You must tell him yourself, or else we had better not say anything about it. He quite counts upon it, and once when I said I thought Mr. Merivale was a little too grave for you, he told me—in short, he did not seem to think me very wise."

"I am not a bit afraid, mother. I will go and tell him directly. I think I ought, don't you?"

"Of course it will be best, if you don't mind. Come back and tell me what he says," and Mrs. Lyndsay reclined in her chair again, to consider the event that had occurred.

Mary had no fears of her father's displeasure; she trusted his love too much for that; but she had a natural shyness in approaching this subject, and her heart beat as she knocked at the door.

Captain Lyndsay was sitting at the window reading, not luxuriously, like his wife, but upright, with an old book on a desk before him. He was a great student of history, delighting in military details, for old association's sake, and in political intrigues from natural turn of mind. He studied intently; reading not the light epitomes of the day, but the long histories of old times. When engaged in study, he did not approve of being disturbed, and his "come in!" was sharp.

He always dreaded a household grievance; but Mary never had grievances, and his brow cleared when he saw his daughter's face.

"I am come to tell you something, father," she said, approaching him at once, and laying her arm confidently around his shoulder. "My mother fears you will be displeased, but when you have heard all, I don't think you will."

Captain Lyndsay looked in her face, saw her red eyes and heightened colour, and expected one of two things. He was prepared for either.

"Speak it out at once, Mary," he said, quickly, but not unkindly; "never be afraid."

"I am not, for I know you only wish me to be happy."

"Certainly not. Speak out my love."

"Mr. Merivale asked me this morning a strange thing," she said, tremulously. "He asked me if ever I could love him, but I could not, and I told him so."

“ You were hasty, Mary.”

“ Dear father, it almost broke my heart to say no, when I saw how unhappy he was; but I could not do it. I should die if I did. It was better,—at least I thought it was,—to say it at once. It is no use to think. I *never* can love him.”

There was a pause. No answer from Captain Lyndsay.

“ Are you sorry, father?” Mary asked, timidly.

“ I certainly am, Mary. I have for some time observed that Mr. Merivale was becoming attached to you, and it gave me great pleasure. I liked to think, my dear child, that you could be settled near us in our declining years, and that you, having comforts yourself, would be able to provide comforts for your mother and me at a time of life

when we may need them. I was glad, also, to think of the help you would be in guiding Frank, and getting him on in the world, and making a home for him in case anything should happen to your mother or me. Naturally, therefore, I am disappointed and sorry."

Her father's words were like so many stabs to Mary's sensitive mind. She was so miserable she could not speak. For a moment she felt even guilty; but when, putting his arm kindly round her, he asked her if she did not allow she had been hasty, her heart spoke again at once; resolute and decided.

"I am sorry, dear father, more sorry than I can say, to have given this grief to you and him, but I do not love him, and it would be a dreadful thing to marry and not to love. I wish I did, I wish I did—but I cannot."

"Don't distress yourself, my love," he said,

perceiving it was useless to press the point any further; "it is done, and it cannot be helped. I may regret what has happened, I do regret it very much, but I am sure you would have pleased me if you could, and so let us say no more about it. Wash your face, my child, and cheer yourself, and think of it no more."

At once relieved and grieved, Mary left her father. The relief was felt insensibly, in the soothing sense of his love and kindness, but the grief was sharp. To have pained him, to have lost an opportunity of pleasing him; it was an additional misery to the miserable day.

Late in the evening a note was brought to her from Miss Merivale :—

"DEAR MISS LYND SAY,

"It has pleased God to release my mother from her long sufferings. She died at

six. May you and I, and all, have grace to follow her !

“ Your obliged and sincere,

“ CATHERINE MERIVALE.

“ If in your prayers you think of the desolate, pray for my brother to-night.

“ Cleeve, 9 o'clock.”

It was not a note to soothe Mary's unstrung nerves. Her night was a night of horror. Mrs. Merivale's deathbed, Mr. Merivale's agony, and her father's disappointment, blended together and magnified by the powers of dreaming fancy, almost drove her to madness. It was the entrance into a life of thought and feeling, and a painful one. Never again, after such a night, could she be the light-hearted being she had been before.

She rose up, however, herself ; saddened and subdued, but still herself. An hour or

two of sleep refreshed and strengthened her, and after having felt for a day that life was a burden too heavy to bear, she woke to her usual thankful happiness that she *was* alive.

In the course of the day Captain Lyndsay despatched the following note to Mr. Merivale :—

“DEAR SIR,

“Even in this hour of affliction I cannot refrain from expressing to you my sense of the high honour you have done my child. I regret her hasty decision on my own account, on yours, and, above all, on hers ; but I am not surprised at it. She is at this time too young to understand the strength of your attachment, and too innocent and timid to be otherwise than startled at it. But it will not be so always. She has powers and feel.

ings of which she is herself unconscious.

“It is not, however, for me to speak of a future which is in your hands, and not mine.

“I cannot conclude without expressing my deep sympathy with your present loss. Time, and time alone, can heal it.

“I remain, dear Sir,

“Your obliged and faithful

“S. LYND SAY.”

To this note no answer was returned. Captain Lyndsay expected one for some days ; but, when it came not, was more satisfied that his own passed unnoticed. He flattered himself that his vague words had taken root.

CHAPTER X.

“Were all the year one constant sunshine, we
Should have no flowers—
All would be drought and leanness ; not a tree
Would make us bowers.”

H. VAUGHAN.

“ON what sum do you suppose a man can support a family?” This question was suddenly asked by Alan Sinclair, after sitting one morning for half-an-hour in Mrs. Clifton’s drawing-room, with a book in his hand.

“I was wondering what occupied your

thoughts," she said, laughing; "you have been so very attentive to your book. To the best of my belief, it is turned upside down."

He threw the book away without satisfying her on this point, and rose up to have his question answered.

"Your question is too vague," she said. "I should say three or four thousand—that is for comfort; Dr. Rowley would say eleven or twelve hundred. Poor Mr. Willmott the curate would say one, two, or three. It is not a question that can be answered by generalities."

"I mean myself," he said, colouring as he spoke. "On how much can a man in my position live; by live I must be understood to mean to live properly."

"Are you thinking of marriage?" she asked, with pleasure dancing in her eyes.

"That depends on what you say."

"But you are thinking of wishing to marry, whatever I may say."

"Yes. I found out yesterday that I did. That brought me over here this morning. If you tell me it is impossible, then the less I come here the better."

"I am so glad," she said, heartily. "Of course it is my darling Mary."

"Yes," he replied, smiling, "I don't think there can be much doubt about that. But do not let us talk of the thing, Mrs. Clifton. I wish to have a definite answer, and be put out of my anxiety."

"Tell me what you have, and then I will tell you if I think it will do; that is, we will consider it together."

"Counting my pay and altogether, I make up about six hundred a year."

"And what prospects?"

"None beyond the very poor one of

rising in the army, which I suppose will come in due time."

Mrs. Clifton's countenance fell. She knew he was poor, but she had not anticipated poverty like this.

"But Lord Sinclair!" she said, her eyes brightening again; "surely he would do something?"

"My uncle gave me my commission, and he has promised to purchase for me when my next step comes. This is being very generous, and I neither expect nor wish for anything more. He is not very rich, and he has three children of his own. You think it will not do?" he inquired, fixing his eyes upon her, and his countenance clouding in its turn. "Well then, I must put an end at once to dreams that are folly, and visits that are worse."

"Do not be so hasty. It will be a

smaller line of life than I am well acquainted with, but as the greatest part of the world live on under five hundred, of course there is no impossibility in it. I will get my house books and my housekeeper, and do it thoroughly. We will consider item by item."

She rang the bell.

"The house books," he said, smiling, "but not the housekeeper. If once I and the books are seen together, I am a doomed man. As an old servant used to say, 'I can see that two and two make four.'"

"Always wise and prudent. Why are not you Mr. Clifton of fifty, and let me be Miss Sinclair of eight-and-twenty? Now come here," she cried, as the books were brought, and the servant left the room; "we must enter into the science like learning a language. I will subtract

luxuries and superfluities, and see what remains."

The examination was more serious and difficult than Mrs. Clifton anticipated, but she was a woman of energy, and her eyes had the faculty not only of seeing what they wished, but also of making things appear as she wished. At the end of two hours, she drew out a statement of a small establishment, arranged with every comfort, and some luxuries, for £550 a year, leaving, as she said, a large margin for sundries.

Alan contemplated it thoughtfully.

"Do you really and seriously think it will do?"

"I do indeed, and even better than I have said, for you must remember that Mary has lived on less than this all her life long, and knows therefore how to make small means go far. What is

poverty in my eyes will be riches to her."

"Yes, of course, I thought of that. I should never dare enter upon such a life with a fine lady. But then, I must not have this pressed too far. I am not proud, but every man should, I think, remain in the position in which he is born, and I should be miserable if my wife had not the common comforts belonging to the sphere of society in which she must move. I don't want anything beyond. I am no lover of show, but I do like things to be done decently and in order."

"Depend upon it, if you married Mary on two hundred a year, your house would be decent and in order. I was a little startled at first, because I always supposed you to have a thousand a year, which is a good

round sum, but I now begin to see with other eyes, and I think you will have a very nice little *ménage* on £600."

"And Captain Lyndsay, will he be satisfied?"

"Of course he will. He is a vain and ambitious man, I should fancy, and besides the relief of marrying his daughter, and washing his hands of her, he will not be insensible to the alliance with the aristocracy. But will you forgive me if I ask you one question? Are not your considerations somewhat late in the day? Supposing I had put my veto on your prospects, what should you have said?"

"You know what I should. I consider you as Mary's guardian, Miss Lyndsay's, I mean, and if you had said I must give it up, I should have paid you my farewell visit to-day."

“And calmly submitted to my decision?”

“Submitted, whether calmly or not, I cannot tell.”

“And Mary?—was she to have no consideration?”

“I fear as yet, Mrs. Clifton, there is no need to think of her. If I had thought there was, perhaps I should not have cared to consider so closely. I had only to think of myself. As soon as ever I found that I could not live without her, which was only yesterday, and quite a chance discovery then, I asked myself the very serious question whether I had any right to marry; and not being able to solve it, I came over for you to solve it for me.”

“If you do not think me impertinent and over-curious,” Mrs. Clifton said, eagerly, “I wish you would tell me what

brought you to so sudden and strange a discovery. You know it is the property of lone women of my age to be curious and interested in such matters. It revives youth."

"It was only," he said, colouring, "that a friend of mine announced his marriage to me. He was in an excited frame of mind, and somehow or other the things he said agitated me. I could not quiet myself again. Then I found it out."

"And do you mean to say you never saw that I wished you to marry Mary. I thought I made it too plain."

"Yes. I am not blind. I saw it very well, but that had no effect on me. As I told you the first day, no matchmaker in Christendom could ever influence me in such a matter. I thought I was keeping watch, and not allowing myself to go

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beyond interest, and I confess I was taken by surprise at last. And now thank you for listening to me, and thank you for helping me in future; for though I should prefer to help myself, in this case I cannot do it. You must make opportunities for me to see Miss Lyndsay."

"You could not give me a more desirable office, nor could you put yourself into the hands of a more discreet person. You shall see her this afternoon, and have her all to yourself, and yet there shall be nothing to startle her. Trust me." Her bright eyes danced with the delight of scheming and its successes. She was a happy woman.

In the afternoon she drove in her barouche to call for Mary. It was the very day after Mrs. Merivale's death. At her summons, Mary came to the carriage door without her bonnet; but at a glance

both Mrs. Clifton and Alan saw that she was changed. Her step was not the elastic step belonging to her usual demeanour, and her countenance was serious.

No notice, however, was taken. Mrs. Clifton made her request that Mary would take a long drive. "I have a call to make," she said, "about five miles off, and the lady I am going to see has a lovely garden. It will please you, Mary, and indeed I will take no denial. You must come."

"You must. Do!" Alan said.

Mary's countenance cleared and brightened. The very sight of Mrs. Clifton's smooth, untroubled face was a restorative.

"If my father has no objection, I shall like it of all things," she cried eagerly. "I will not keep you a moment;" and this time she flew back like lightning to the house.

Captain Lyndsay came to the window and looked out. His brow contracted into displeasure, but no opposition was made to Mary's request. "What must be must," he thought, "and the sooner over the better." As Alan jumped out to put Mary into the carriage, and carefully guarded her muslin gown from the touch of the wheels, he thought it would be over very soon.

The cloud had passed from Mary's face, and brightness and animation had returned to her eyes, till they passed the gates of Cleeve. The change in her countenance at that sight was like night after morning, in climes where the change is sudden. All she had gone through came with more than the vividness of reality before her.

"My dear Mary," Mrs. Clifton said, kindly putting her hand on her arm, "what is the matter with you?"

"Did you not know?" Mary replied,

tremulously. "Mrs. Merivale is *dead*." She spoke the word with the awful emphasis she always laid upon it.

"Dead ! No, indeed, I had not heard it. Well, dear Mary, I am sure it is a happy thing for her ; a very happy release from a world where she had no pleasure. You must not make yourself unhappy about that. When did it happen ?"

"She died last night. I went to see her in the day. She sent for me." Then, as again remembrances flashed vividly before her, she added, shuddering, "Oh ! it was dreadful."

"Was her death dreadful ?" inquired Mrs. Clifton. "Really, Mary, your friends should have more consideration. You should not be allowed to see such things."

"Oh ! no, not her death. She sent for me, and I was glad to go if she wished it ; but all so unhappy. It was dreadful,"

she said again, her eyes filling with tears. "Sometimes I think I shall *never* forget it."

"Now, Mary, I lay my embargo on the words Cleeve and Merivale for this day. Remember my good advice. Do all the good you can in the world, but never fret yourself about things you cannot cure. Let this fresh air and bright sun blow all dreary thoughts away. Come, Captain Sinclair, entertain us."

He woke up from an intent contemplation of Mary's countenance, and did her bidding to the best of his powers. And the rapid movement, the sunny beauty of the country, and the kindness and entertainingness of her companions did their work. Again Mary rolled away from her mind the heavy weight of the Merivale sorrows.

The lady to whom the visit was to be paid was an invalid. She was an early

friend of Mrs. Clifton's, with whom, on finding herself in the neighbourhood, she was glad to renew her acquaintance. On arriving, they were shown into a pretty drawing-room, opening into a garden cultivated with much care and taste; but the lady had not left her room. On hearing of Mrs. Clifton's arrival, she expressed a wish to see her upstairs, and Mrs. Clifton departed, desiring Alan to show Mary the garden.

In the garden they wandered together till all had been seen that could be seen, and from the garden they proceeded to explore a copse wood, and from the wood some meadows, till they found their way home again. It was an unformal, country-like walk. And as they walked they talked. The easy manners of Mrs. Clifton, and the ease of intercourse in her house, had destroyed all barriers between them, and

their conversation was the free, disjointed talk in which the young delight when they find a companion congenial to their mind.

On re-entering the garden a servant who had been searching for them, approached to say that Miss Forester wished to see them, and, if it would not tire them to wait so long, would be down in the drawing-room in a quarter of an hour.

"I shall not be tired, shall you Miss Lyndsay?" Alan inquired.

"Not the least," she heartily replied. "This garden is so lovely."

"Another invalid!" Alan observed, smiling, as the servant disappeared. "Are you not afraid?"

The brightness and freshness which the last hour's enjoyment had restored to Mary's countenance, was overcast

at the question. Again arose before her eyes the scenes of yesterday.

“I know you and Mrs. Clifton think me very foolish,” she said sadly, “but I cannot help it. I cannot bear to see suffering. It makes me miserable.”

“And why should Mrs. Clifton and I be so strange as to think your pity foolishness? The world is selfish enough; what a world it would be if no one felt for the sufferings of others.”

“Mrs. Clifton is not selfish,” Mary said, “and yet. . . . Perhaps after all it is more selfish to be as afraid of suffering as I am.”

“Mrs. Clifton is no longer young,” said her companion, philosophically. “None can reach her age without learning, some learn much earlier, what a sad changeable world this is. And when they once know it, it no longer terrifies and perplexes them to

hear of troubles. You would fain believe there is nothing but happiness in the world, and therefore sorrows frighten you."

"Why the world is to be so sad, I cannot understand," Mary said, with a sigh.

"That is a very grave question, and it requires a preacher, and a good one, to answer you. I don't mean to say that I have not some ideas myself as to the uses of adversity. This is one. What do you think of it? Look on troubles for the mind as you do on medicines for the body—do you not see some uses then? I am afraid those who think best of human nature must own that there are some diseases in the mind ; and how are they to be cured without medicines?"

"I think happiness is a better one," Mary said, eagerly. "I am sure, judging by myself, I am better when I am happy."

“Judging by yourself is no rule,” Alan cried, with a tone in his voice that no one could mistake. “You are the most unselfish person that ever breathed, and I cannot see what sorrow could ever do for you.”

Mary’s heart beat suddenly and strangely, and a blush dyed her cheeks. It was the definite moment when she began to know what he meant and felt for her.

“Do not think me better than I am,” was her low and grave reply.

“No indeed I do not. I only think what I see. You must not judge by yourself; but look at selfish, self-indulgent, money-getting people, and then ask yourself what they would be if no trials ever came to soften them, and teach them to feel.”

“Perhaps,” she reluctantly allowed.

He looked at her, reflected for a moment, and then asked, “Perhaps you think me over-given to sad and grave reflections. Should

you care to hear, or would it give you too much pain, the griefs that have made me so?"

"It will give me pain, but I should like to know," she replied, without raising her eyes.

He knew he gave her pain, but if she was to be what he hoped she would be, the partaker of all his griefs and joys, it must be given.

Briefly, but with a touching brevity, he told her of the deaths which, in three short years, had made him alone in the world. A twin brother first, then a young sister, the pride of the house, a father next, and lastly his mother, of a broken heart. He spoke calmly, for they were long-past sorrows, but his words bore the traces of a grief which would live and die with him.

Pitiful as Mary was, she was not one of those whose sensibilities know no restraint or

control. She would not usually have wept at a sad tale, powerless to restrain herself for his sake or her own; but on this day her unstrung nerves knew no master; they had been shaken from their balance, and she could not compose them again.

Though deeply touched by her sympathy, Alan was indignant with the self-indulgence which had led to its exhibition. "I am a brute, I believe," he said with tenderness. "Thank you, but forgive me. "I am afraid," he added cheerfully, "that you will now shrink from me as you do from that sad Mr. Merivale."

Mary smiled, looked up quickly, and drove back her tears.

"I hope not, for I am not at all of the Merivale kind. We must all allow there are sad things in the world, but there are bright things enough as well. This day for instance. What a day! Heathenish people jeer at the

English climate. I never saw *anywhere* a day like this."

He had touched on one of Mary's heartfelt prejudices, the infinite superiority of England to every realm upon earth; in her cordial sympathy with his sentiment, he won her from her depression, and they talked dogmatically of England's charms till they were summoned to the house.

Mrs. Clifton appeared at the door to beckon them into the drawing-room, and then presented them to her friend.

The invalid lady was not one to act as a damper to joy, but rather as a cordial to all sad thoughts and fears. Her room was sunny and fresh, her dress was ordered with care, her smile was bright. If sickness had taken up its abode in her house, it had somehow been made welcome.

In the course of conversation, Alan

spoke of a young plantation which had attracted his attention, and the lady then revealed that it was eleven years since she had seen any part of her grounds except those beneath the windows.

At this discovery, Mary fixed upon her a gaze of intense compassion.

“You pity me,” said the lady, reading the expression of her speaking face; “but I do not need pity. The loss of health is indeed a great loss, but if we are so cheered and supported that we do not feel the loss, it becomes a little one. My spirits never fail me, and there is not a day on which I do not own with thankfulness that my pleasures are greater than my pains.”

“Has your drive done you good, dear Mary?” Mrs. Clifton said, affectionately, as they approached her cottage home.

“Great good,” she cried, with grateful

warmth. "I don't think I can ever feel again as I did this morning."

"Don't! A dark and troubled spirit is a bad spirit. I never let it come near me. And it is more than unwise. I am no preacher, Mary, but I can tell you also that it is not a Christian spirit."

When Alan had assisted, or endeavoured to assist, Mary in her quick exit from the carriage, he said in a low voice to Mrs Clifton—

"Is it too late for you to call? Meaning what I mean, I think I ought to call, and this seems a good opportunity."

"It is never too late for anything I choose to do," she said, smiling, and immediately called after Mary, "Mary, prepare your mother. I am coming to pay her a visit if she has no objection."

Notwithstanding Mary's troubles, her mother's muslin gown had been finished, and conscious that she was well and becomingly dressed, Mrs. Lyndsay expressed much gratification at the visit.

Alan looked about him with eyes of serious scrutiny, as on an abode which might be a picture of his future home. He was not disconcerted by his observations. He allowed the doors, windows, rooms, and passages to be small, but the spirit of cheerfulness and order had presided over every arrangement, and a more luxurious taste than his might have looked around with pleasure. Everything that could be white and clean was white and clean, and everything that required colour was fresh and bright. The sweet scent of flowers proceeded from all parts of the room, and gave beauty, where poverty might not otherwise have allowed beauty to enter.

"Is that your drawing?" he inquired of Mary, pointing to a little water-coloured sketch which hung against the wall.

"No, I am sorry to say I cannot draw;" then blushing, she added; "I cannot draw, or play, or sing, or do anything that most people can."

"What matter?" he said, smiling.

"You are very comforting to say what matter! Frank says it is a very great loss, and I think Frank is right."

"Perhaps he is, if people have time and taste. Of course, the more we do to please ourselves and others the better. But if people have other accomplishments, as you have, then no matter."

"My accomplishments!" said Mary, laughing; "I am afraid they are few in number."

"I think otherwise." He glanced round

the room and into the garden, and added, "You make me quite in love with a small house. I did not know it could be so pretty."

Before the visitors departed, Alan determined to speak to Mrs. Lyndsay, and, not knowing what else to say, he said how pretty her garden was.

Mrs. Lyndsay, with, as she imagined, great policy, replied that she had nothing to do with it, and added a few words of praise on Mary's handiness and industry. They were well received, and Mrs. Lyndsay felt she had done a deed. Since Mr. Merivale's business had come to an end, it was as well to be thinking of somebody else. Not that she could ever spare Mary, but as Captain Lyndsay seemed to wish her to marry, it was as well to have something in view.

"That is a handsome young man, Mary,

very," she observed, when they were gone.

"Yes, mother," Mary replied, with a faint conscious blush.

"His features are not, perhaps, as good as Mr. Merivale's,"—for Mrs. Lyndsay was critical in her taste; "but he is handsome, very. Not that I have any reason to compare them together," she added, with discretion.

"Oh, mother!" Mary cried, "must I think of Mr. Merivale any more? I have been so miserable, and now I would forget if I could, and if it is not wrong."

"I am sure, Mary, *I* should forget if I could. I never see the use of fretting over what can't be helped; "but" after a pause "I don't know what your father would say."

"It seems unkind," Mary said, thought-

fully ; and she stood at the window, a grave shadow stealing over her face. All looked bright without, in the evening sunset ; and in her own heart, which had been so sad, there was a rising sun brighter still. She thought of him at Cleeve, sitting, perhaps, in the presence of death, all dreary and dark, with none to comfort him, none but his comfortless sister ; and, as she thought, tears of pity fell down her cheeks. Yet, in the very midst of her compassion, some light passing idea wafted her thoughts away to the garden of the invalid ; and while the tears were yet upon her cheeks she was lost in a reverie as sweet as it was vague and formless ; and Mr. Merivale was forgotten.

CHAPTER II.

"I tried to solve the problem—Life."

A. A. PROCTOR.

MARY'S nerves were tranquillized, and she in a few days was her usual self. Perhaps a self happier than before, for a golden future began to cast its rays about her, and invest her life with youth's ideal glory.

No sunshine or happiness in her own inner life could, however, close her eyes to the claims of duty, and though she had received no message from Cleeve, she felt

she ought to go there. On the day after the funeral, which took place four days after Mrs. Merivale's death—her son being unable further to endure the thoughts and sight of the desolation of the house—the strong pressure of her conscience permitted her no longer to delay a visit.

“I am going to Cleeve, mother, to see Miss Merivale,” she said in the course of the morning. “I think I ought, don't you?”

“I had not thought about it, Mary, but now you ask I think it is a right thing to do. But, gracious me, what shall you do if you meet that poor man?”

“I must bear it, mother,” she said, nervously folding her hands.

“So you must, that's true. Yes, it certainly is a right thing to do,” and Mrs. Lyndsay composed herself to think it over, while Mary went her way.

Such as have been early accustomed to

sorrow, those who are experienced in scenes of pain and sickness, can hardly imagine the agony of Mary's mind in her approach to Cleeve. Yet never did her thoughts admit the possibility of turning back. It was right to go, and therefore it must be done, and she must meet courageously whatever she had to see or hear. So with swift steps she passed up the avenue to the house door.

The one servant in deep mourning opened it, and left Mary standing trembling in the hall, while he went to find out Miss Merivale's pleasure. When he came back, he signed to her to follow him.

It was an additional shock to Mary that she was taken into the identical long north room, so associated with Mrs. Merivale's illness and death. Miss Merivale had made no change. Except her own dress, there was nothing to speak of the death that had been there.

Mary's lips were quivering with agitation, but Miss Merivale was calm. She thanked Mary in her soft voice, a shade softer and kinder than usual, and made her sit down, and then a pause ensued. She waited as if for Mary to speak, and Mary trembled and was silent.

At length she looked about her with tears in her eyes, and spoke her thoughts. "Oh, Miss Merivale, how sad and dreary it seems! How can you bear to sit here?"

"Would change of place bring my mother back?" she said gravely, "She is gone, and I must walk the rest of my way alone. It is best to meet the truth at once."

"But you must miss her so here."

For a moment Miss Merivale's lips quivered with an unaccustomed agitation. She was not a stock or a stone, and the loss of the cares that had occupied her life had left

her desolate. She was hardening herself according to her principles, but the work was not yet done. She recovered herself in a moment, however, and said, "I do miss her, Mary, but from the sufferings God appoints it is a weakness to shrink. It has pleased Him of His goodness to release her from the sorrows of this mortal flesh; I must live out my time and trust to follow her, submitting as she did to His will."

"Is it wrong to shrink from sadness, and wish for comfort?" Mary asked earnestly.

"Not wrong, perhaps, but weak. We know that our sorrows are those things which will bring health to our souls. Let us receive them, then, with thankfulness, and endure them to the end."

"But happiness is also good!" said her young visitor, wistfully.

“Is it, Mary? Does it teach you that this world is vanity? Does it make you long for Heaven? Does it force you to remember God? Ask yourself. Does happiness make you tremble for your soul?”

“I fear not,” Mary said, her colour rising, and looking down.

“If it could, Mary, then happiness would be good. We shall be happy in Heaven. Till then we are all wanderers, going astray in our own delusions; let us be thankful for the pangs by which God brings us to Himself.”

There was a pause. Mary could say no more. The dark shadow, the dread of existence, was falling over her heart again. She could not gainsay Miss Merivale’s words, and yet, and yet; was life on such terms to be endured?

Miss Merivale rose and searched for something, then returned and put a small

Bible into Mary's hands. "This belonged to my mother," she said, "Hubert desired me to give it to you, in token of our gratitude for your kindness to her. Prize it, Mary; and may it support you in your trials as it supported her!"

Mary wept bitterly; not only at the gift, but at his thought of her when she had given him nothing but grief.

With more of human sympathy than was common to her, Miss Merivale fetched a glass of water and quietly signed to Mary to drink it. Meanwhile, she got a sheet of paper, and taking the Bible from Mary's hands wrapped it up, and returned it

With an effort Mary recovered herself.

"I hoped to have comforted you, Miss Merivale. I am afraid I do but make you more unhappy. I will go now, and come back another time."

She rose from her seat, and held out her hand, and then only found courage to say—

“How is your brother?”

“He is gone back to his idol, Mary—*gold.*”

She spoke with bitterness, yet it was a bitterness that was regretful more than harsh.

Mary tried to say something, but could not. Miss Merivale looked at the workings of her countenance, and said at last—

“He told me nothing, but I know what has passed. Oh! Mary, you might have saved a soul from utter death, and you would not.”

“I did not love him; I could not,” she said, tremulously.

“Love! Mary. What is human love compared to the worth of an immortal soul?”

Mary gazed at her with fear and awe. So quick was her conscience, that any question presented thus vanquished her. For a moment it did seem that the worth of the two ought not to be compared. But the clearness of her mind could only temporarily be darkened. After an interval, during which Miss Merivale watched her intently, she looked up, and calmed by the effort which had recalled her scattered thoughts, said—

“I must have sworn to love him, and it would not have been true. Can it ever be good to swear a false thing?”

“Perhaps not, Mary ; you may be right. I must be patient. God may save him yet.”

“When you write to him or see him,” Mary said, earnestly, “will you tell him how much I thank him for what he has given me?”

“I will, Mary.”

And so the visit came to an end.

Mary returned home with a heavy, but yet, on the whole, a relieved heart. Miss Merivale had been kind, and he had thought of her kindly, and she had been able to send a message to him—all these things gave her hope and comfort. She might yet be able to fulfil her promise to his mother.

CHAPTER XII.

“Happiest of all is that her gentle spirit
Submits itself to yours to be directed.”

MERCHANT OF VENICE.

“I SAY, Mary, how do you do to-day?”

Mary was working at the open window of the drawing-room; looking up she saw her brother Frank outside. It was early in the morning, and the pleasure was an unexpected one.

“Frank!” she exclaimed, in joy and

surprise, "what good thing brings you here?"

"That poor old soul," he replied, nodding towards Cleeve, "sent me down with some papers for his sister to sign—money matters I guess—and he told me I might have the rest of the day to myself. So here I am."

"Have you been to Cleeve, then?"

"Yes, and gave the papers into Miss Merivale's own fair hand. 'What shall we do to-day?'"

"In a quarter of an hour I shall be ready for anything. I must finish this cap for my mother, and then it is a free day."

"I thought I should find you stitching. What do you say to a visit to Mrs. Clifton? I should not mind lunching with her, for I'm terribly hungry."

"Oh, yes, certainly; I will be

ready in less than a quarter of an hour."

"Then I will go and pay my respects to my parents," and he walked off whistling.

He passed his father's window, and was called to account for himself and his visit.

When satisfied on the point, Captain Lyndsay inquired how he left Mr. Merivale.

"Quite well, sir."

"Does he appear to feel his mother's death?"

"He is a little more glum than usual, of course, sir, but nothing very particular."

"Is he civil to you?"

"Quite as civil as he is to the rest—perhaps rather more. He was very civil in giving me a holiday to-day."

Captain Lyndsay was satisfied, and retreated from the window. Frank passed on in search of his mother.

"I say, Mary," he began, as shortly afterwards they set forth on their visit to Mrs. Clifton, "this is a strange tale my mother has been telling me. So that poor old soul popped the question to you. What fun it must have been!"

"Oh ! Frank !" said his sister, sorrowfully.

"Poor old soul ! who ever would have thought the romantic passion could enter his heart ? I would have given a whole year's income to hear him."

"Dear Frank," she said, imploringly, "pray don't ridicule him. I never liked it ; and now, when he is unhappy, I cannot bear it."

"Oh ! I dare say he is comforted now. Men don't mope over such a thing for ever and ever."

"I hope he is," Mary said, earnestly.

"I say, Mary, I suppose you know that I think you a regular born idiot for refusing that young man?"

Receiving no answer, he went on. "I can tell you good offers are not so plentiful. You may live twenty years before you have such another."

"Nothing is good that does not make people happy. It was not good to me."

"I can tell you he has fifteen thousand a year, if he has a penny. That is not a thing to be scorned."

"I never cared about riches, Frank; I have been happy poor; and I think I would even rather be poor than rich."

"Rather be poor than rich! Why, you don't consider all the good you might do with

your money! What do you say to dropping a hundred pounds in an envelope to me some morning? Would not that be a pleasure?"

"Yes, I should like that," she said, laughing, "and if ever I have hundreds I will do it. But don't let us talk about this any more. Tell me about some of your friends. I would much rather hear about them. How is Miss Davies?"

"She's going to be married; didn't I tell you?" and he drew himself up with a stately air.

"Oh, Frank!" and she looked earnestly in his face.

"Well, Mary, what's such a glum face for? Do you suppose I care what she does? Oh, dear, no! We are very good friends, and I shall give her a present on the happy occasion. If she did not

care about me, I am sure I had no reason to care about her. I am not much in want of people to care about me." He walked on with a few lofty steps, and then changed the subject.

Mrs. Clifton was alone, and was delighted to see Mary; and not having survived a taste for being liked and admired, was flattered to know that Frank had chosen to spend his holiday in visiting her.

They were sitting together, Frank and Mrs. Clifton conversing on some news of the day which he was in the proud position of having brought from London, when the servant threw open the door, announcing "Captain Sinclair," and Alan hastily entered.

He looked flushed and heated, either with his rapid ride or some other excitement, and stopped short at the unexpected sight of Mary and Frank.

He recovered himself in a moment, however, and sat down.

Mary had, as usual, provided herself with Mrs. Clifton's knitting, and now began to knit, not with her fingers only, but her eyes. He had glanced at her with a glance that made her heart throb and tremble. Something was coming which must disturb the happy, unruffled present, and whose coming was, therefore, whatever it might prove to be, pain.

Mrs. Clifton observed Alan's flushed countenance, and, anxious to discover what was the matter, plainly asked the question—"You look as if something had happened, Captain Sinclair. Am I indiscreet, if I say, what is it?"

"We heard some news this morning," he replied, quietly. "We are to sail for India in six weeks. I came over to tell you."

Mrs. Clifton and Frank exclaimed. Mary worked more steadfastly.

"Did you expect this?" Mrs. Clifton asked.

"No. It has been long talked of, but I thought the trouble would blow over, and we should not be wanted. I made a mistake, it seems. The authorities think badly of the last news."

"I wish I was going," said Frank.

"I wish you were with all my heart; that is, if your going would do instead of mine."

"Why do you hate going? I think it would be great fun."

"Because I like England better," Alan said quickly. "As one grows old," he added, smiling, "one finds England is the only place to live in; is it not, Mrs. Clifton?"

"By no means appeal to me," she

replied, laughing, "I am going to Italy this winter, and I mean to enjoy myself beyond expression."

"Appeal to Mary," remarked Frank. "She will agree with you thoroughly. She always says *nothing* shall take her out of England; but she don't mean what she says, I'll be bound."

A pause followed this speech. Alan glanced at Mary. Her colour deepened, but she worked on, and never raised her eyes.

"Nobody knows anything about anything till they have tried it," remarked Mrs. Clifton, in a light tone. "Though not, strickly speaking, grammatically worded, that is a moral aphorism which it would be well if we remembered, all of us. But now to business. Captain Sinclair, forgive me the question; how long do you intend to stay with me? Do you mean to sleep here?"

“ Yes, if I may.”

“ Then I have some arrangements to make. Will you be so good as to come with me into the next room for a few minutes ?”

Alan rose quickly, and with relief, and followed her.

“ How silent you are to day, Mary ! Are you thinking of poor old soul ?” Frank inquired, when they were left to themselves.

“ I was listening,” she replied, looking up and smiling.

“ To be sure, how rich Mrs. Clifton must be,” he said, glancing round the room overspread with the countless ornaments and luxuries of a modern drawing-room. “ I wish she was a young woman, and that I could marry her.”

“ How you think about riches, Frank !” Mary said with some disdain. “ What does it matter about being rich ?”

“It’s all very fine talking, Mary, but if you happened to want riches you would care about them just as much as I do. You are so ignorant of the world that you cannot appreciate them now; but see if the day don’t come when you will long to be rich.”

“Mr. Lyndsay, are you tired?” inquired Mrs. Clifton, appearing at the door with her bonnet on.

“Tired,” he said, indignantly, “oh, no!”

“Then will you give me the favour of your company for a short walk along the high road. I have some business, and Captain Sinclair declines to come. We shall not be gone for more than a quarter of an hour or so. Mary, dear, you will excuse me, will you not?”

Mary looked up with a blush and a murmuring answer, then returned to

her work, and worked more steadfastly than before.

The door closed, and she worked on as if unable to pause or think. After two minutes' solitude the door opened and closed again, and Alan re-entered.

He was too sensitive himself not to feel and understand the awkwardness and embarrassment of her position, and, without a moment's hesitation, he drew his chair to her side and sat down.

But such scenes, unless where there is necessity for description, are better imagined than described. In some respects, the course of love had never run smoother, for there was little of uncertainty on either side as to the feelings of the other. Nevertheless, there were circumstances of impending moment, which gave to the scene its agitating interest.

Alan saw that Mary had been startled

by the news of the morning, the former announcement of Dr. Rowley having, in truth, passed from her mind as the gossip of an hour. He was in haste, therefore, to exonerate himself from blame in having sought to win her, with such prospects before him.

He had not needed to question her regarding her feelings on the subject of going or not going to India; he had read on her countenance, from the first instant, the inflexible resolution she had formed, a resolution springing not from want of love and trust in and to him, but in dutiful affection to her parents, to whom she was all in all.

But in other ways also the question was not needed. He had a friend who was not willing only, but anxious to exchange. That very morning, at the first whisper of the news, he had hastened from London to make his request and ask for a decision. "But

"I could not give it, Mary," Alan concluded. "It rests with you. If you will be my wife, I will not go; if you are denied me, better for me to go where duty, and perhaps glory, may wait me, than to waste my life in fruitless repinings at home!"

When Mrs. Clifton and Frank returned, the latter was extremely surprised at seeing Mrs. Clifton, after looking at Alan for a moment, shake his hand with an interminable shake, and then kiss Mary with an interminable kiss.

That sort of thing looked like a marriage; but he could hardly believe in a marriage here.

Nothing was said, and Mrs. Clifton talked quick and fast of the visit they had paid; and Alan, in high spirits, joined in whatever she said. The idea began to fade away.

Mary was longing to get home, but she remembered that Frank had wished to

remain for luncheon, and she would not deprive him of it. He had a school-boy's taste for good things.

It came at last, and was scarcely over before she rose and asked him if he was ready to go. Mrs. Clifton made no opposition, but led Mary into the drawing-room, to fetch her bonnet; and there, after embracing her again, told her how happy she had made her. "And let me have the pleasure, my dearest child, of hearing you say you are happy."

"I am; too happy," Mary said; "too happy to know how much."

"And what have you settled to do?"

"Captain Sinclair will come this evening to speak to my father."

"Then I won't detain you, my dear child. Go." Mrs. Clifton was for that day on the pinnacle of human felicity.

"I say, Mary," inquired Frank, as they

walked along, "what has been going on there? I never felt more uncomfortable in my life. I suppose all that embracing meant something?"

"Guess, Frank," she said, blushing.

"Good gracious, Mary, you don't mean it. How long has this been going on? Why was I never told? Oh! that was the reason of poor old soul being rejected, I suppose?"

The first shadow fell on Mary's face. Her happiness would cause sorrow. It gave her a pang, and she walked on without speaking.

"Don't look solemn, Mary, I beg. Tell me all about it."

She had little to tell, and that little was so incoherently put together, that Frank was much dissatisfied, and abused her and his mother for their closeness, till they had nearly reached home. He then suddenly said, "I can tell you one thing, Mary, I don't think you will scorn me for wishing for riches

any more. If I have been rightly informed, Captain Sinclair is as poor as a rat."

"So he told me, but if he does not mind, Frank, I am sure I don't."

"That's very well now, but you will think differently in a few months' time, and I wonder what my father will say. I don't think he will much approve."

"Don't you think he will like this?" Mary asked, and the second shadow stole over her brow.

"I think he will be very much disappointed, and so I am sure am I. I always thought you were not going to be so pretty for nothing, but that you would bring a little pleasure and comfort into our dreary home. I am very much disappointed indeed."

"You make me unhappy, Frank. I never knew you thought about me in that way." She spoke quite sadly. Her own happiness was now a secondary thing in her eyes.

“Don’t think of me, Mary,” he said, good-naturedly. “I certainly always did hope you would be able to do something for us, but so as my father don’t object, I am quite content. I like Captain Sinclair, and though he is poor, he is quite first-rate. His uncle’s a lord.”

“Is he?” Mary said, surprised.

“Yes, did you not know that? Lord Sinclair, of Loch-Art. Whenever I meet a person I make it a point to find out all about them, and so I inquired into his affairs after I met him that day. So you see, Mary, you may do well after all.”

On entering her home, Mary kissed her mother, and, after murmuring a few perplexed words, and begging her to ask Frank “all about it,” went direct to her father.

Captain Lyndsay had been for some days in expectation of this announcement; as

soon, therefore, as he looked in Mary's face, he knew what was to come. He laid down his book, but made no inquiry.

She approached him and put her arm round his neck; paused a moment to get her breath, then timidly said, "Father, Captain Sinclair is coming to see you this evening."

"Is he, Mary?—what for?"

"He wishes, father—" she paused and blushed, but he would not help her; "he wishes to be your son."

Captain Lyndsay looked in her face.

"And you wish it too, Mary?"

She silently kissed him.

"Well, Mary," he said, kindly, "I confess I have been expecting something of this kind of late. Of course I shall be glad to consent to his and your wishes *if I can*. We will talk it over when he comes."

His voice was kind, but not hopeful.

“He is poor,” Mary said, tremblingly, “but so am I, and I do not wish to be rich.”

“To be poor, my dear child, is a vague term. When I know what Captain Sinclair has, I shall know whether or not I can consent. You must trust to me. Whatever I do will be with a view to your welfare and happiness.”

He put his arm round her waist and kissed her.

“I know,” she said, gratefully; “and, dear father, for your sake I wish he was rich.”

“So do I, Mary,” he replied, smiling, “for mine and yours; but wishes are not of much use. If they were, I should not be what I now am. Perhaps you think me mercenary,” he added, gravely, after a moment’s thought; “but, my dear child, a young thing like you knows nothing

of the cares of poverty. If you had felt what I have felt, if you had passed the sleepless nights and anxious days that a father passes, who is what is lightly called 'poor,' sometimes uncertain whether he can provide for his family the common necessities of life, then you would know what poverty is, and would believe that I am not mercenary when I say I will shield you from it if I can."

Mary looked into his grave face; observed the lines of care and anxiety on his brow; and for the first time felt that there was more in poverty than she had dreamt of in her philosophy.

"I do trust you, dear father," she said, quickly; "I know you will let me be happy if you can, and if not—" she paused; then in place of the gaunt spectre of disappointment that for a moment hid her happiness from her eyes,

a smiling angel arose, and as its sunshine fell upon her, she added, "we must wait and hope."

"You shall go now," he said, wincing a little at this conclusion. "I will consider this matter. Send Captain Sinclair to me when he comes."

Nothing could be more urbane, more courteously kind, than Captain Lyndsay was to his guest when he arrived. But Alan felt at the first instant that the case was hopeless. Nay, though he was addressing a man poorer than himself, he felt ashamed of the sum he proposed as sufficient for Mary's maintenance. He saw also how mistaken Mrs. Clifton had been in supposing his connections would be a bait. There was that in Captain Lyndsay's conversation which plainly said that the substantial, not the imaginative, gifts of the world were those he prized.

He entered upon the subject of poverty as he had done with Mary, but more at large. He dwelt upon trifling minutiae of household arrangements with the understanding of one who had weighed and considered all things, forcing upon Alan's conviction how little he, in his single life, had comprehended the state on which he proposed to enter. He dwelt upon all the disappointments and sufferings through which he had passed, and which had made him aged before his time, and finally, he spoke of Mary;—of what she was; of the blessing she had been; and of his hope that her, at least, he should guard from the cares and troubles that had made life joyless to him. He spoke well—with grave and even solemn words, and they were not in vain. Before he concluded, Alan had almost ceased to wish; (not as concerned himself, but Mary).

He had ceased to wish to lead her, in her fresh bloom, into the wearying cares of which her father spoke.

Captain Lyndsay's words were sincere, and his arguments from his heart; one mistake only he made. He spoke as if his first object was Mary's happiness; it was not so. He cared for that, very truly; but his first object was himself.

There was a pause when he ceased speaking. Alan then inquired if what he said was final, or whether he would allow a hope. "He dared not," he said, "hold out much prospect of improvement, but in the changes and chances of life, some there *might*, some there *must* be. Would he consider it?"

"My dear Captain Sinclair," Captain Lyndsay replied, gravely, "forgive me if I speak my mind plainly. I have, per-

sonally, no possible objection to you; if therefore, a favourable change took place in your circumstances, I should willingly commit my daughter into your hands. But as the future is not at our disposal, it is unwise to speculate upon its accidents. I am no friend to hopeless engagements. At Mary's time of life, I should consider that I failed in my duty if I allowed of one. At seventeen the heart is too weak to be subjected to the sickness of hope deferred. A wise man leaves the future alone."

Alan remained silent. He was partly reproaching himself for the blindness and selfishness of his conduct, partly revolving vague possibilities that he might conscientiously hold forth in the future. While he pondered, Captain Lyndsey arose:

"As there is nothing further to be said between you and me, I will call Mary,

and relieve her from her natural anxiety," and he slowly crossed the room towards the door.

Seeing the uncertainty of his steps, Alan sprang forward and held out his arm. The movement touched Captain Lyndsay with a momentary pang, and it was only by gravely declining his help, that he surmounted the pain.

Mary was waiting the end of the conference with a beating heart. Its protracted length was waking hope within her, but her father's grave face and affectionate manner put it to flight. He called her, and gently said, "My dearest child, I fear it cannot be." As they walked along the little passage, and re-entered the room, he leant softly and fondly on her for support; and Mary drove back her springing sadness, determining to bear all bravely for his sake.

Captain Lindsay then repeated to both together what he had said separately to each. His words were, as before, grave, kind, and sincere, full of regret, but firm in the consciousness of doing his duty.

Some heads have not the power of seeing plain sense when it is put before them. Some cannot help seeing it, however much it may oppose their wishes. Both Mary and Alan, but especially Mary, belonged to this latter class. Fully conscious of her youth and inexperience, and gratefully trusting to her father's affection, she had nothing to yield to his words but submission. *She* might think differently, but he must know the best, and she acquiesced sadly but silently in what he said.

Captain Lindsay felt as all must feel the blessing of having to do with a sane

and *convincible* mind ; but its effect was not favourable to Mary's wishes. Her submission restored him to self-complacency. Had she wept and pleaded, he would have been resolved, but pained. As her silence owned him to be in the right, he was the more convinced that he *was* right.

When his statement had come to an end, he again lifted himself from the chair on which he had been heavily leaning, and said with a half smile, "Though I am old, I have been young, and I can imagine you will like to be alone before your separation. I have full trust in Mary," he added, looking at her. "I know she will say no words, and enter into no promises, that would not have my sanction if I were present."

So saying, he shook hands with Alan, and left them to themselves.

Captain Lyndsay's studies of human nature had not been fruitless; he saw at once how to deal with his daughter and her lover, and bound and swayed them to his will by the fulness of his trust. Some natures cannot be trusted; he would have known also how to deal with those.

"I thought, Mary, this day's happiness could not last," Alan said, as he departed. "How selfish I have been!"

"Selfish! How?"

"I have tried to win you, doubting all the while, in my own heart, if I had the right. I have, for my own selfish gratification, brought a cloud over your happiness."

"No, greater happiness," she cried, with tears shining in her eyes.

"Thanks, dearest, but if so, a happiness that must be resigned; and what is that?"

“Why should it be resigned? Is there not hope?”

The words were scarcely said, before, with a blush, she added—

“That was not for me to say.”

“And why not for you?” Alan said, looking fondly into her speaking face.

“I know,” she replied, gravely, “how different a thing waiting would be to you, from what it will be to me. I shall be happy at home; but you want a home, and you will see others who would make it for you; to wait many years would be a weary thing for you. I feel how right my father is.”

“You say truly in some things, Mary. I do pine for a home, and having had the hope before me, I hardly know how I shall put it aside again. So fully also do I feel the truth of your father’s

words, regarding a hopeless engagement for one so young as you, that perhaps, if I could, I should do as you say, and try to make a home with another. But some things cannot be. I never loved before, Mary, and never shall again. A man knows when a thing has taken root in his heart, never to be uprooted. Such root my love for you has taken. My first, and as to my cost, I shall know, my last love, Mary."

"I feel the same," she said, in a low voice, "but must not say it."

Captain Lyndsay was patient, and did not disturb the parting hour of the lovers, though he thought it needlessly prolonged. It was no doubt a sad hour, yet it was the hour of her life to which Mary ever looked back as the happiest. It was in this hour that she

entered fully into the heart and mind of her lover, and felt her own dissolve and melt away in union with his. "There is a charm" Mrs. Opie says, "in all things that *fit*. How much more then when mind fits mind." The fitness here was too perfect for earth. It was such fitness as the first man must have felt when a woman was specially created as a help-mate for *him*.

Captain Lyndsay, in his indulgence, had been short-sighted. That hour made it an almost impossible thing to forget.

It was a bitter evening for Mrs. Clifton, when Alan returned with the tidings of his ill-success. He dined with her, and then went to London, to give his answer to his friend.

She did not endeavour to alter his decision on that subject. She was not

quite sure how or in what line it was done, but she knew fortunes were made in India, and she drove away her depression by a vision of Alan returning in a few years laden with riches.

“And what are a few years at yours and Mary’s age?” she said. “Say six years. Mary will be three-and-twenty, and you will still be in the very prime of life. I am not sure that it is not better as it is. Seventeen is much too young to marry. I did not marry till two-and-twenty, and many people said I was too childish even then.”

Alan smiled, and accepted her consolation. He only suggested that it would be as well not to let Mary build on the hope of imaginary riches.

“Now I hate you,” she said, in her eager way; “what business have you to be so discreet? So as Mary remains faithful,

it matters not what hopes cheer her mind?"

"Any true ones you please," he replied, "but not the hope of my returning a Nabob. She is already more hopeful than there is any ground to be, I am afraid. I think a true friend's office would be to weaken, not to strengthen, her confidence."

"I have no patience with you. The next thing you will say is, that you hope to hear that Mary is shortly to be married to some rich Jew, who will support her in comfort."

"No, Mrs. Clifton, not that," he said, gravely. "If I did not feel a vain, perhaps, yet certain hope that Mary would be at some time my wife, I don't think I could support existence. You have to do, I can tell you, not with children who have little at stake, but with those who

have ventured all,—and you must deal with them accordingly.”

There was a look in his countenance that told Mrs. Clifton a case of real feeling was before her; and she took the lesson home to guide her in her dealings with Mary.

When they met, and the subject was talked over, she was guarded. She cheered her with hopeful words, but the words were studiously vague; and even in cheering, she spoke of other hopes in life, and endeavoured to dissipate, rather than to concentrate her mind on one future.

Alan had scarcely departed before Mary was called on by Frank to prepare him a repast previous to his return to London. Captain Lyndsay liked a late dinner. It was one of his few luxuries, and nothing was ever allowed to interfere with his

comfort. German young ladies are said to console their mental sorrows by assuaging hunger and thirst. To assuage that of others, is perhaps more efficacious. Mary washed her face, and conquered the tears of a not unpleasing sadness, and came cheerfully down to attend to her brother. When his repast was prepared, she brought her work and kept him company while he partook of it. He was very good-natured to her, and took this opportunity to tell her confidentially that what she was suffering, he had already endured two or three times. He therefore could feel for her; but he could also give her this comfort, that a very few days made all things straight.

She smiled, as she shook her head,—but tears flowed against her will.

“That’s because you have no knowledge of the world, Mary. You think people

mope over these things all their days, but that's quite gone by. And I say, Mary," he added, not unkindly, but expressing what it would scarcely have been in human nature to resist, "who was right about riches? I think you will own riches are some good now."

"Yes," she said honestly, and with a sigh.

"Ah!" Frank observed triumphantly, but restrained any further expression of his feelings.

CHAPTER XIII.

“ So hard believed was sorrow in her youth,
That she thinks truth was dreams, and dreams was truth.”

DANIEL.

A YEAR passed away slowly, yet swiftly; marked by few events worth recording. At the end of September Mrs. Clifton gave up her house and went abroad for an undefined time.

“ When I come back, my blessed Mary, I shall seek you out,” she said, as she embraced her; “ but I cannot even for you

undertake to be a correspondent. Letters are so many iron chains about my soul, and it is never easy while it has one pinning it down. And though, now and then, I shall wish to hear how you are, I cannot beg *you* to be a good correspondent either, for I have a conscience; and if people write to me, try as I may, I cannot be easy if I do not reply to them. Let us, therefore, swear an eternal friendship; mine is sworn already; but let us be free. And when I do come back, Mary, how shall I find you? Perhaps, a fine London lady, taking your place amongst the handsomest. Who knows? Stranger things have been. God bless you, my angel, and make you as happy as your good heart deserves to be."

Mrs. Clifton was gone, and all the amusement and excitement of her six months' fancy, her gay conversation, and the romance

begun under her auspices, was gone by like a dream. Mary returned to the humdrum, as Frank called it, of her home life. There are few who would not have experienced a sense of flatness in existence, and few who, for a time at least, would not have yielded to its influence, especially if unguided by the principle which says, in dreariness and disappointment, "Why restless and cast down, O my soul? Hope thou in God." But Mary did not sink. She was at that time of life when hope is strongest. A child lives in the present, and the thought of a year, to a child, is farther off than eternity. But early youth lives wholly in the future, and scarcely thinks of the present that fleets so rapidly by. Its food is hope; hope such as Collins paints it, when—

"Hope enchanted smiled,
And waved her golden hair."

Such hope was Mary's—a vague, inspiring brightness, that made her love to sit and dream, while her fingers flew over her work.

Besides this, Mary was busy. She had time to dream, but she had no time to pine. The fear that she had disappointed her father made her yet more eager to save him expense, to procure him comforts, to make his home cheerful; she had also a natural desire to make him see that poverty was not so miserable a thing. She entered more and more into the science of house-keeping, gave the powers of her practical mind to the consideration of due and undue economy; worked unceasingly with her fingers to make her own and her mother's dress pleasant in his eyes, and never failed to cultivate her mind by the sound reading he recommended, that she might be a fit companion for him. Life passes rapidly

under such circumstances. The well-filled day brings the peaceful night, and the peaceful night keeps the spirits calm and even. "Happy the man who has found his work ; he needs no other blessedness."

It was several months before she saw Mr. Merivale again. If he came to Cleeve, it was not with the regular visits of old times. He came, perhaps, for an hour, unexpectedly ; passed the hour with his sister, and returned to London. Mary longed to meet with him, if once only ; to be kind for his mother's sake ; to show¹ him she would yet be his friend ; but she never heard of his visits till he was gone.

At length, Frank sent her word that he was to be down at Cleeve the following Sunday. She determined to see him.

It was at the latter end of November ; a fine mild day.

Miss Merivale now went to an evening service at some distance, and Mary knew she should find her at home at four o'clock. With the quick steps of agitation, she entered the gates of Cleeve, and had only just entered when she perceived issuing from one of the dreary walks the object of her search.

Pausing not a moment, she hastened to him, and held out her hand ; but partly her rapid movements, and partly the sight of his gloomy face and mourning dress, in that very spot where she had parted from him, so overcame her that she could not speak. She was too young to have acquired much self-command when her feelings were excited, and her agitation was visible.

That very agitation, however, touched and softened him. He saw she felt for him. Had she wished to show kindness, she did it thus more perfectly than by any resolves she could have made. He held the hand she had given him, and while he held it, the dark shadow fell from his face.

Mary meant to be kind. She knew she ought not to be more than kind. The fear of being more, gave her the power she had for a moment lost. She withdrew her hand from his grasp, and gently asked, "Shall I find your sister at home?"

"Does Catherine expect you?" he inquired, in a tone which seemed to say, "*I*, then, had no place in your thoughts."

"No, but I came to see her; and," she added, as their steps moved together

along the avenue, "I hoped to see you also, Mr. Merivale. Frank told me you were here. It is so long since——" she stopped, afraid of what she was saying.

"It is long," he replied. "This place has no attraction to me now."

"It must be sad to come," Mary said, kindly; "but it is very lonely for your sister without you."

"I am nothing to her," he replied. "She has no care for me."

"She does, Mr. Merivale—indeed she does."

"She cares for me as I am a *soul*," he said, with bitterness; "but she has no care for me as I am a man."

Mary could say no more, and they walked in silence to the end. He went up the steps and opened the house door for her. He then said, with a quivering

movement round his lips, "you will find her in the room you know well. I cannot bear to go there now. Farewell."

He held out his hand.

"I felt as you do about the room, when first I went," Mary paused to say, "but Miss Merivale is better than we are. She has thoughts about it, we do not know how to have."

The softness of her voice, the kind manner in which she paused to answer him, above all, the pronoun *we*, as if in spite of all, he was not so cast out, but that she could sympathize with him, touched him as he never in her presence had been touched before. He grasped her hand, murmured "God bless you," and was gone.

Mary went sadly onward to her visit, but afterwards she remembered she had done what she could, and was comforted.

After this she met him occasionally. He seemed neither to seek nor to shun her. Probably Captain Lyndsay's words had excited future hopes, but there was nothing in his ways or manner which gave ground to suppose they had.

A year, or rather more, passed thus away. One morning Mrs. Lyndsay was reading the newspapers, while Mary sat at work. Captain Lyndsay took a *Times* a few days old, and when she could get nothing else Mrs. Lyndsay contented herself with that. But her treat was the *Morning Post*, or better still, some gossiping country paper. Frank often paid his mother the pretty attention of procuring her, sometimes borrowed, and sometimes begged, from his many acquaintances, one of these.

She had got a Scotch paper this morning, and it was a perfect feast ; so many anecdotes, so many riddles, so many extracts from

books of travels, so many odd pieces of intelligence old and new.

“Good gracious me, Mary,” she cried, suddenly, putting down the paper, “what a shocking thing !”

“What, mother ?” and Mary looked up.

“It is about Lord Sinclair, that uncle you know ; so you will like to hear. Two sons—his only two sons—drowned at once !”

“Oh ! mother,” Mary cried in tones of horror. “Two sons !”

“Yes, here is all about it. Wait a minute while I read. They went out on a lake in a boat—and a sudden wind got up—and they were both drowned ; and one was found, and one was not. And there was a boatman with them, and he swam well and was saved. Well, that is a shocking thing, indeed.”

“I hardly think it *can* be true,” Mary said, with a sigh of hope, as if her doubts made the facts doubtful.

Mrs. Lyndsay, who regarded her pieces of news as her own property, was a little indignant at the doubt.

To ensure belief she read aloud the whole paragraph. ‘It was too true. It spoke not only of the facts above mentioned, but described also the interment of one son, the father’s agony, and gave many other particulars regarding the place and family.

“Such things,” Mary said, crossing her arms and pressing her hands against her heart, “almost make me wish this world was not a world. How can people live who have such sorrow? But it is not common.”

“No, that’s true, and very comforting,” observed Mrs. Lyndsay, and she returned

to the newspaper, to harrow her feelings afresh by re-reading the paragraph. Like most vacant minds, she delighted in horrors.

“Good gracious me, Mary!” she cried again, after having perused it attentively, “how stupid I was not to think before! Listen to this, ‘The present heir to the estate is in India;’ of course he is. How came I not to think? Why, you know who that must be!”

A torrent of blood flew to Mary’s face, but the expression of her countenance was one of pain and agony. “Oh! mother,” she cried, “how dreadful!”

“Yes, Mary, very awful indeed, but you know we should look for the good in the evil, and of course it is a great good to think that Captain Sinclair may be rich one of these days. It makes all the difference, and, Mary, dear, perhaps you will be happy after all.”

“Oh! mother, could there be happiness bought at such a price!”

“Of course we would not have wished it, Mary; of course not; but when things happen we must take them and be grateful. Dear me, how very curious I should have happened to see this; and how very curious if you should ever be Lady Sinclair!”

“Dear mother, I cannot bear it,” Mary cried. “Pray don’t say such shocking things.”

“Well, perhaps it *is* better not. It came into my head, and so I said it; but we must not make too sure of anything. It is a very shocking event, certainly. I am glad to see there is no mother. If there had been a mother, it would have been more dreadful. Fathers get over such things. Fathers do not care much for their sons.”

"Don't they?" Mary asked, with surprise.

"Not much, Mary. So I have observed. I should say that upon the whole men don't care much about anything but themselves; but then you know that is right, for if there were no men in the world, what a world it would be! Good gracious me, Mary! it terrifies one to think of it." She looked really startled at the vision she had conjured up.

"Men feel as much, I think," Mary said thoughtfully, "though they don't like to show it, and I think I like that best."

"Well, perhaps. At any rate I am glad there are men to protect us in the world; but I am glad too that those poor young men have no mother to grieve after them. Certainly the father will get over it soonest. I wonder if

your father knows. It will be something to tell him."

"Something to tell him;" some piece of news overlooked by him; that was Mrs. Lyndsay's triumph of triumphs. It did not often occur. When it did, it made one of the white days of her life. She had the triumph on this occasion. The piece of news *was* news to Captain Lyndsay. It is true that he snubbed her when she made her communication; treated it as of no importance, and sharply desired her not to fill Mary's mind with trash; but she had discerning eyes in this case, and was perfectly aware that he did receive the news into his heart of hearts, and give it a lodgment there. This consciousness elated her, and she received the snub as if it was the sweetest praise.

CHAPTER XIV.

“ Oh ! mortal folk, but we be very blind,
What we least fear full oft it is most nigh.”

SIR T. MORE.

“ WHY, Mary, so that young lover of yours is likely to be a Lord. My eye ! who knows but some day you will be a Lady ?” This was Frank’s greeting to his sister when first he saw her after the late event.

The tone of her mother and brother on this occasion first brought to Mary’s

consciousness the fact that there was something in their minds which jarred with hers. She could not even now, even in her most secret heart, allow that they were vulgar, but the impatience, perfectly foreign to her manner, with which she bore such allusions, marked their offensiveness to her taste and feeling. Seeing the effect of his speeches, Frank, according to the usual habit of brothers of his age, teased her by their repetition, until his wit was worn pretty well threadbare.

But though, considered in that point of view, the event which had taken place exercised no influence on her mind, it was far otherwise with regard to the hopes it excited. Shocks are fortunately transitory in their duration. The mind, startled and troubled by a sudden announcement, has the power very quickly to throw the

oppression aside. Fortunately, for what would human life be if shocks were enduring? With Mary, it was as with the rest of the world. What in the first instance seemed to her too shocking to dwell upon, became shortly a dream-like fact, and when she had looked the sad event in the face, she saw the difference it would make. Poverty with a hope is a far different thing to a hopeless poverty. She saw it ; read that it was so considered in her father's silent face, and received the truth into her thankful imagination. With a bound she passed from that vague hope which only gilds a far future into the definite hope which has features, form, and being.

But it was not many weeks that she was allowed to remain in this Elysium.

The troubles so long smouldering and

threatening in India began in the autumn of the year to assume a serious character. Slow to fear, and confident in the happiness of life, Mary read at first with a doubting mind. She could not believe in miseries to come. But when fear enters a naturally hopeful heart, it enters like a giant, and terrors as great as its hopes come like a strong man and take possession. A few days Mary bore her terrors alone, then unable to understand, or battle with them, went boldly to her father for comfort.

No explanation regarding her interest took place; but as if that interest was tacitly allowed and approved, her father entered upon the subject, and gave her the information she desired. His manner was kind, and his confident tone raised her from terror to happiness again. He persisted in the belief that the storm

would yet blow over, or if not, treated the idea of resistance to British troops with a British soldier's contempt.

He made her happy by his hopefulness—happy also by his sympathy. A new bond of union was cemented between them. He invited her confidence and inquiries, and while she hung upon his words for the support of her life, he, with a father's and a soldier's interest, watched for her.

The next mail brought bad tidings, and the next, and the next. The events of the winter that followed are too well known to need mention here.

Mary's personal interest in these events was not left doubtful. Once, in describing the order of march, Alan was spoken of by name, with these epithets, "that spirited and deserving young officer." These few words gave a reality to her imaginings

which hitherto she had been spared, and dropped a new ingredient into the proud love which followed him.

There were battles one after the other in succession ; so quick that relief and anxiety alternated too rapidly to allow relief to be other than the breathing space of a moment. What then was felt by a few, has since been felt in most homes and hearts in England, and there needs no words to picture what such days and hours bring forth.

Mary bore up bravely at first. It requires time for terror and anxiety to do their work—time for the horrors of war fully to be understood by those far away. After the first bloody battles through which her lover passed safely, there came a pause ; but in that pause Mary's heart began to die within her. She had realized all, had read of

slaughter till her blood ran cold, had followed him with an intensity and agony of interest that showed her very life bound up with him, and the springs of her sanguine nature began to run dry.

Then came another victory. Though twenty miles from London, Mary heard the guns proclaim it in the still evening, and the first gun was as the death stab to her heart. They were firing—not only over the glory of the living, but the dead, and the thought of who the dead might be, took sole possession of her mind.

There was delay in the publishing of the lists. During those days of expectation and agony, Mary went about her work as usual — asked no questions, gave no expression to the dread that was consuming her. The only outward token of what she felt within was in one

flushed spot like the hectic of consumption on each cheek. It never moved. She went to rest with it at night, and rose with it in the morning. Went to rest? Yes. The tired body would repose, but the mind rested not. A bloody battle, a vague imaginary thing, but awful in its vague imaginings, was the one thought which swallowed up the whole of earth. That was real—all else was a dream.

The lists came at last. Captain Lyndsay was alone, and his heart was touched enough to make him quail as he glanced over them. Slowly, as if his slow movements could avert the evil, he unfolded the paper and looked. Then he laid it down, and put his hands over his eyes. He was a selfish man; but he had a human heart, and that heart bled for Mary.

To Alan's name was simply appended the word "killed." Captain Lyndsay afterwards heard further particulars. His body had not been found, but as his horse was seen dead on the brink of the river near which the battle was fought, it was supposed that he had fallen into the same waters, which were choked with the enemy's dead. The terms in which his daring courage was spoken of, the regret expressed for his loss, awakened in Captain Lyndsay's heart a touch of sorrow not for Mary only, but for himself. The love of self had extinguished many generous emotions in his breast, but had not extinguished his honour for a brave man.

Mary was in the drawing-room working with her mother. She worked now with a madness of industry, as if her fingers' movements stilled her thoughts.

It was long since she had ceased to make inquiries—all was left to her father. Her life hung upon him.

He slowly opened the door, and stood there. His countenance said all that was needed to be said. Mrs. Lyndsay screamed. Mary started up, then fell on the ground without a sound.

She had fainted. So God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, and deadens, in hearts that cannot bear it, the first sharp stab of more than mortal agony.

Captain Lyndsay raised his daughter in his arms, and carried her without any assistance to bed. In the excitement of the moment, his limb became strong, and it was not till the deed was done that he remembered his feebleness. He hung over her, touched and sorrowful, and gently kissed her brow. "But it will soon be over," he sighed to himself,

as he turned away, and left her to the care of her mother.

When that care had revived Mary from her swoon, it was evident that she returned only to a half consciousness. She spoke of the work she had to do, not of the shock that had overpowered her. Her eyes moved restlessly around, as if watching for something, and yet she asked no question. Mrs. Lyndsay told her she was not well, and as she soothingly kissed her, desired her to lie still. Mary acquiesced with an apathy which showed her not to be herself. She remained quiet till the evening, but the flush returned to her cheek and deepened in brilliancy. Towards evening, signs of light-headedness appeared, and, beginning to be alarmed, Captain Lyndsay sent for the apothecary. He at once declared that brain-fever was impending. "There has been some un-

natural tension of the nervous system," he remarked, and he looked with a searching and curious gaze into the face of Captain Lyndsay.

Before morning the impending evil was a certain one, and for seven nights and days Mary hovered between life and death.

CHAPTER XV.

“God sends us monitors and ministers—
Old age that steals the fulness from the veins,
And griefs that take the glory from the eyes,
And pains that bring us timely news of death,
And tears that teach us to be glad of him.”

TANHAUSER.

WHEN Mary returned to life and convalescence, her first feelings were those of thankfulness. She had been down to the gates of death, to the borders of the unseen world, and the return to life was a blessing. Her nature was earthly, her

very virtues, her strong affections, her clinging to what she saw, her practical mind, all were earthly. Earth was her native country, and she returned from death as a sorrowful exile returns, thankful to breathe its air once more.

Yet her approach to that unseen world had not been ineffectual in raising her affections above. As she lay in the weakness and repose of reviving health, she meditated as she never had meditated before, and thoughts of heaven began to assume a reality in her mind. He was gone from earth on whom her heart's young affections had been fixed—gone from earth she could not doubt to the land of the blessed. She endeavoured to follow him, gathered up many a chance word that had fallen from him, shrined them in her mind as the words

of an angel, and endeavoured to enter into a like spirit to that which had animated him.

Convalescence is not a perfect state of mind. It is more or less an illusion. Life does not wear its dull colours ; all is dim and misty, and the most practised mind becomes imaginative. This state of illusive weakness helped Mary. Her mind dwelt less on the sorrowful earth from which the glory had departed than on the dim visions she built of a heavenly future. Undisturbed, therefore, by passionate sorrow, her body recovered its health, and her mind, during the same process, was elevated and prepared for what else of joy and sorrow might be in store for her.

Her first act, on her recovery, was to beg her mother to allow her to receive the Communion. It was not the habit of

the house to think seriously, nor to think of this duty at all, and Mary, like the rest, had hitherto stood apart, not in carelessness, but awe. The circumstances of the parish, an old and half-childish rector, and an overworked curate with a large family, were not favourable to the religious improvement of those who are called "decent people." There being nothing flagrantly pressing in their case, their improvement was usually postponed to one of those convenient seasons which an overworked man rarely finds. The curate called when Mary was ill; and promised to call again on her recovery, which he did; but though his visit may have strengthened her good resolves, it was her own conscientious nature which drew from her the request, and made her determined to stand apart no more. Her mother, a

thoughtless, not ill-meaning woman, listened to what she said, and accompanied her. It was the first beginning, on Mary's part, of a definite religious life, and its feeling, though faint and evanescent, was sincere, and therefore fruitful.

Thus Mary began again to live, and entered again on her usual course of life and duty.

But health is not like convalescence. The practice of life is not like the dreamings of weakness. When Mary really awoke to life and duty, her eyes were opened. The excitement was at an end; meditations on death, and recovery, penitence, good resolves, and faint yet sweet thoughts of reunion in a distant world, all these thoughts belonged to her dreaming life; from her practical life they flitted away. She was herself again;

her days unchanged, her duties unchanged ; but the brightness of life was gone, and to endeavour now to draw joy and hope from the old routine, was like the endeavour to draw music from an instrument that had lost its sound.

Her strength failed ; her spirits flagged ; the colour which had begun to return to her cheek, faded again, and joylessly and wearily she dragged along the appointed duties of the day. It was a case for change of scene, for society, for anything which could divert a mind from melancholy ; but Captain Lyndsay was poor, Mary's illness had made him poorer still, and such a luxury as change of scene was not within the limits of his ever-failing purse.

He saw, however, that Mary's nerves were weakened, and that something must be done to restore them. After much

reflection he wrote to Mr. Merivale, and requested him to allow Frank a week's holiday. This was about a month after Mary's recovery. He trusted to Frank's boyish ways and teasing habits, to give the stimulus necessary for youth and health to re-assert its claims. The request was an unselfish one on his part, for his son's society was anything but a pleasure to him. It is possible, however, that the gratification of making a request to Mr. Merivale detracted from the unselfishness of the action.

His letter simply stated that Mary was suffering from weakness, and from depression consequent on that weakness. No allusion to the cause of her illness was made. The petition then followed in a few earnest words.

To his letter, as before, no answer was returned, but the request was instantly

granted. By return of post, Frank wrote:—

“ MY DEAR MOTHER,

“ Mr. Merivale says my father wishes me to have a week’s holiday. I am sure I am very much obliged to him, for writing is precious hard work in this hot weather. I am to leave London on Saturday. Some of the fellows here are jealous of my favour with Mr. M.; but I know the reason, and they don’t. He has never asked after Mary, but he looked more like a death’s head than ever while she was ill.

“ Yours affectionately,

“ FRANK LYND SAY.”

Frank’s visit was not attended with the success that Captain Lyndsay had anticipated. Mary devoted herself as usual

to his wants and wishes; endeavoured, by thought and care, to supply the place of money in procuring variety for his appetite; attended to all the minute wants of his wardrobe, a button here, and a rent there, &c. &c.; listened to his tales of self, his conquests and disappointments. She thought she was as she had always been; but June is more like December than Mary was to her old self. No cheerful smile responded to him; no arguments amused or ruffled him. She was gentle, patient, and affectionate, but spiritless. Her voice had lost its clearness—her step its elasticity.

At first Frank, singularly fond of idleness, was glad to be at home and to bask unemployed in the sunshine, but before the week was out this pleasure was exhausted, and weary of the dullness of home, he was ready to go back

even to his work. He had been very sorry for Mary, and for a day or two had forbore to complain of her depression; but before the week's end he was much more sorry for himself; and he gave her his mind on the subject.

"I say, Mary," he said, the day before the week was over, "I shall never come home for a holiday again."

He was lying on the grass. Mary was working for him, in a little arbour.

"Why, Frank!" she asked in some surprise, expecting some new revelation regarding his future destiny.

"Why? Why, I don't think there is much reason to ask why! I am bored out of my life, that's why," and he stretched his arms and yawned wearily.

Mary's quick conscience was struck, her colour rose in her pale cheeks. "Oh!

Frank, is it because I am grown so dull that you say so?"

"Well, Mary, I don't know that I should have said that exactly, but since you ask me I must own that is the reason. We both know very well that this home of ours is no great shakes in the way of liveliness; but I never minded so long as I had you to talk to. I am very fond of you, Mary. I always was. I think you a great fool, but I would as soon talk to you as almost any woman,—that is, formerly I would; now I must say it is quite different, and I am thoroughly disappointed." His tone was really pathetic. He did feel ill-used, and he made it plain he did.

Mary was touched by his kind words, and grieved for his disappointment. "Dear Frank," she said, her eyes filling with tears, "I am so sorry for you. I have been

very unhappy, and I am afraid I forgot to think how dull I must be. I am very sorry."

"Oh! don't be sorry," he said, kindly, "it does not matter now, and if you cry, I shall wish I had not said anything about it; at the same time I am glad I have, for I must tell you, Mary, moping is a horrid bad habit. What is the good of moping? It can't bring back things, and I am sure it is very disagreeable for other people to see; it only makes them wretched as well as yourself. I never thought *you* would turn into a moper. You used to be so unselfish; you never seemed to think about yourself at all."

"There have been dreadful things, Frank," she replied, with quivering lips, "things I never could have believed could happen to me. But I see now that you are right. I have thought only of myself. I am glad you told me."

“Of course you could not help it, Mary; it was very natural you should be unhappy. I was very sorry for you, and I am glad of having this opportunity of saying so; but still there is a time for everything, and I think it is time now for you to begin to get over it. My father is quite worried about it, I can tell you that. He got me this holiday, my mother says, for your sake. He thought I should be able to cheer you; but if a person won't be cheered there's no help for it.”

“I am glad you told me. I will try and be cheered. I am sure I ought, when you and my father think about me so much.”

“That's a good girl; that's like yourself. Once in company I heard a person say that every human being was selfish, and I said, ‘All but one.’ It made a

great stir, and they laughed a good deal, and tried to make me tell who, and at last I said 'my sister,' and then they laughed more; but I did not care, because I thought it, and I got a very kind word from a lady in consequence; not any particular lady, but a very nice and pretty one, who said she liked me for what I said. And I know, Mary, you will be what I said to your life's end."

Tears of grateful affection were in Mary's eyes at her brother's words. The deed was done. Captain Lyndsay's purpose was answered. More than any grave arguments, more than any serious persuasions, Frank's mingled kindness and complaining accomplished.

Very penitently Mary owned that she had been absorbed in herself, and with the truth and resolution of her nature, she determined it should be so no more.

She looked about her, and saw that now, as before, she had the power and the call to make others happy. Her own brightness might be faded, but others were hanging upon her for their daily joy; and she accepted the knowledge with thankfulness. She rose out of the darkness and shadow of death in which she had been lying, owned that there was yet a blessing to be won in life, and with the conviction something like its old sweet smile lighted her countenance.

Once roused, Mary did not go to sleep. That very evening saw her, for the first time, attending to her neglected flowers. Of late, the brilliant glow of the summer bloom had been painful to her; but with her new desires better thoughts returned. In former days she had often said that there might be sadness in life, but there was no need to make it sadder by gloom. Why

refuse the bright though simple things that cheer and beautify it? In her sadness she had felt the temptation to forget her words; but, once roused to remember them, she owned their truth and resolved to neglect them no more.

She was standing in the garden, tying up some disordered carnations, when Mr. Merivale suddenly appeared at the gate. She was alone, and, as she did not perceive him, he paused to look at her. The evening sun was falling on her, and casting a warm glow on her cheek, but the glow could not conceal the change in her appearance. He knew not of the mental sorrow, but he saw the wasting effects of illness in her transparent skin and fragile figure. He felt, for the first time, in its full force, what it would have been if Mary had died; and, opening the gate, he came towards her with an agitated step.

She looked up from her occupation, and, as it does in illness, the quick blood flew to her cheek, and vanished again. But she was still and untroubled when he reached her. She had gone through too much to be affected, as she once had been, by his presence.

“Forgive me, Miss Lyndsay,” he said, hurriedly. “I have waited to see you at Cleeve in vain.”

Another stab to Mary’s conscience. Absorbed in one thought, she had forgotten everything besides. “I have not been there of late,” she said, gently. “For a time I could not, but I ought before now. Will you tell your sister I will come.”

He made no answer, but stood gazing at her. At last, almost passionately, he said, “Thank God that I have seen you once more! Oh! Mary, what would this world have been without you?”

He held out his hand to her. She gave hers for an instant, then withdrew it gravely and tremblingly, and moved a step backwards. Touched she was by his unchanged devotion; touched, but not attracted. Almost more absolutely than at first she shrank from it. Human beings are strangely fastidious in allowing affection from their fellow-creatures. Though George Herbert says

“Love is a present for a mighty king,”

there is something in human nature which does not find the present acceptable.

Mr. Merivale read this in Mary's eyes, and if a spark of hope had been rising, it was extinguished.

“Forgive me that I have given you pain,” he said, in a low voice; and without another look, he left her alone.

And then again she wept tears of pity. It was always thus. She could not love him,

but her compassion for him was like an angel's. She shrank from his presence, but he never left her without a weight on her heart.

Captain Lynd say from his study saw the short meeting, the abrupt departure, and his daughter's tears, and was content. It might have been thought, that in the real affection he had shown, and the deep pity he had felt for Mary, his schemes would have taken flight, but it was not so. Other influences—the great influence of poverty had been at work—and if there had once been compunction, this had put it to flight. A long illness in a house whose means are barely sufficient for everyday's wants, is one of the severest trials of poverty. To be poor is nothing, even to a proud man, so long as there is *enough*; enough for that humble scale of living which has been laid out; but to be poor in illness is a trial indeed.

While Mary was in danger, Captain Lyndsay had forgotten his poverty, had invited and commanded the constant attendance of the apothecary. When she rallied, shame had prevented him from owning that the small luxuries ordered were more than he could afford. Some weeks of illness, and some weeks without Mary's hand and mind to overrule the affairs of the house, had brought poverty before him in its most painful forms more vividly than ever, and the conviction was planted in his heart that for Mary and for himself the happiness of life was to be rich. The more resolutely, therefore, was his strong will set upon her union with Mr. Merivale.



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